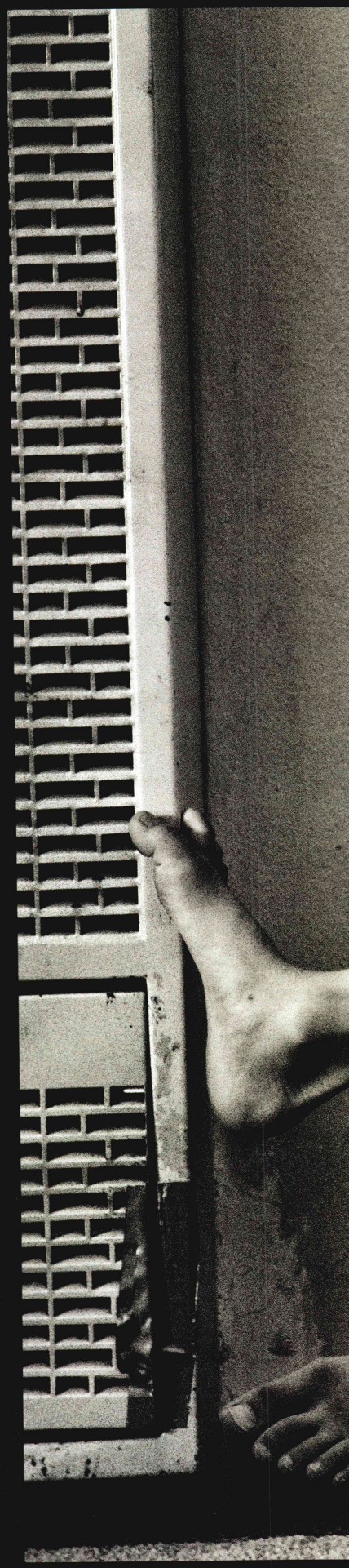
The California Sunday Magazine

Jorge tells Enrique that he will work hard in the fields and Enrique will work hard at school and they will be no trouble to anyone.



"PAPÁ, I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD GO TO WORK TODAY."

The dread and hope of migrant farmers and families

Photographs by Matt Black / Magnum Photos
Text by Diana Marcum

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SAFE HOUSE

A group of Latina women across the country have been working in secret,turning their homes into shelters for abused immigrant women.

By Lizzie Presser
Photographs by Cinthya Santos Briones

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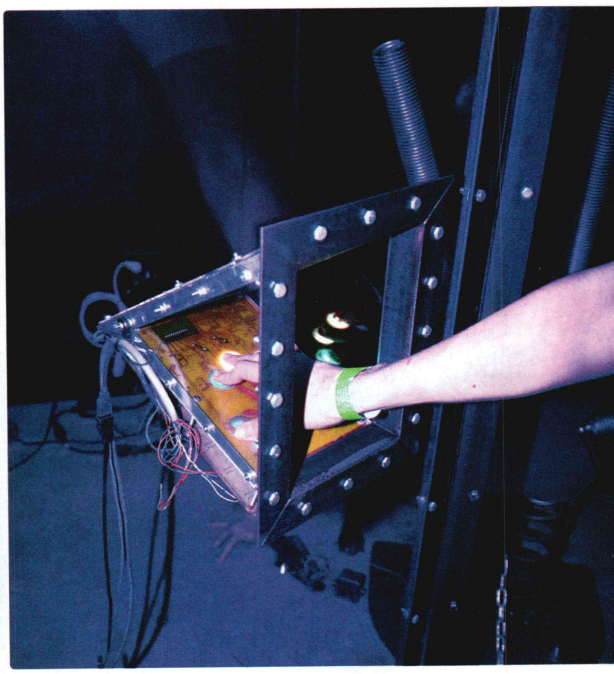
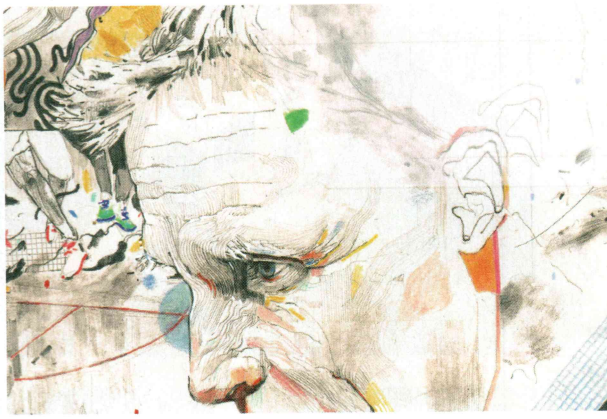
MEOW WOLF'S MAGIC KINGDOM

How a ragtag group of artists launched an art-entertainment empire

By Taylor Clark
Photographs by Christian Michael Filardo





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THE ROAD TO DYNASTY

Favored to win their third straight championship, Steve Kerr's Golden State Warriors face more adversity than fans realize. Kerr speaks with his former coach Phil Jackson — who led two teams to 11 NBA championships — about surviving success.

Interview by Kit Rachlis
Illustration by James Chia Han Lee

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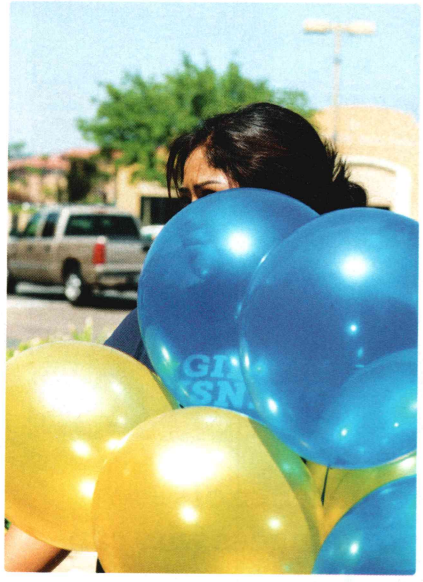
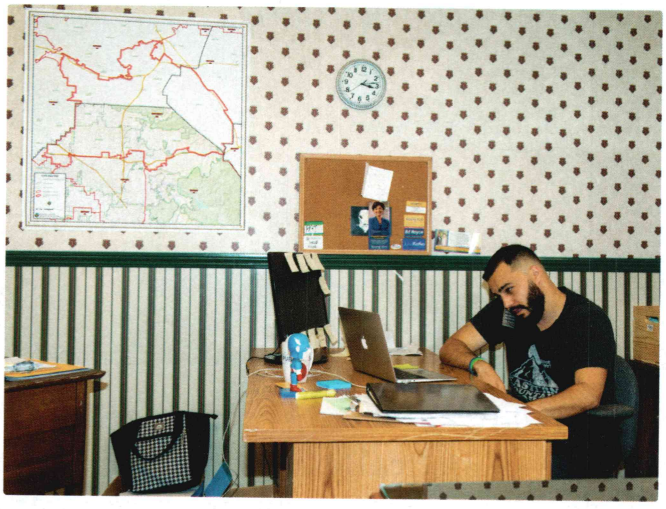
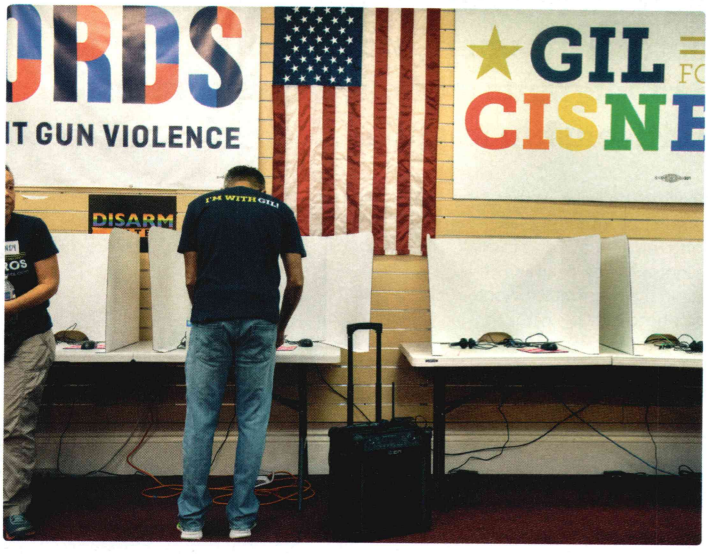
THE MIDTERMS

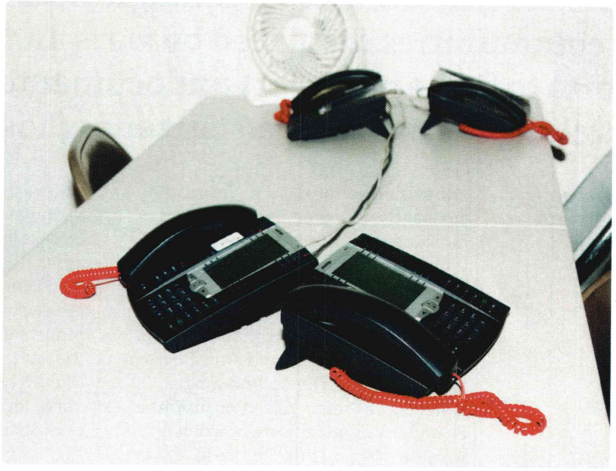
Inside three crucial battleground races

By Ben Christopher, Amanda Fortini, Haley Cohen Gilliland, and Andy Kroll
Photographs by Jessica Chou
Artwork by Dan Gluibizzi









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Launching rockets in the desert

By Wendy MacNaughton

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The White House has made clear its intention to reduce the presence of immigrants in America — drastically limiting the number of refugees who can settle here, limiting legal immigration, ending temporary protected status for communities displaced by wars and natural disasters, stepping up efforts to find and deport undocumented immigrants without criminal records, searching for naturalized citizens whose citizenship might be revoked,

Photograph by Alicia Acevedo

and seizing young children from both legal and undocumented immigrant families at the border and locking them up hundreds of miles from their parents, with no evident plan to return them. It is against this backdrop that we bring you an issue with two features that reveal the shocks and aftershocks of these decisions. Our contributing writer Lizzie Presser takes you inside an underground network of women who are opening their homes to undocumented victims of domestic violence at a time when many women believe that calling the police is too dangerous. And photographer Matt Black, a lifelong resident of California's agricultural Central Valley, examines this turbulent year in the lives of farmworkers in a sweeping photo essay — with reporting and an introduction by the Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Diana Marcum, another Central Valley local. I spoke to Matt about his photography and this moment.

Me: What prompted you to propose photographing farmworkers?
Matt: This year is the 50th anniversary of Cesar Chavez's fast in 1968. Which is the moment that really raised the profile of the farmworker movement nationally. It was a time of great hope for a lot of people. The contrast with what's going on now couldn't be stronger.

Me: You're from the Central Valley.
Matt: It's home. I've lived my whole life here. So when changes like this are happening, I feel really driven to document it, to record it.

Me: Do the changes feel dramatic to you?
Matt: Absolutely. Undocumented immigration is a fact of life here. It's what propels the agriculture industry

and everything else. Historically, it's been a safe zone for people. Very little in the way of enforcement, or ICE raids, until now. All that is getting turned on its head. The culture of fear.... It's surprising. It's troubling. You can feel it on the street. Just this morning there was an ICE raid in a town where I've been working.

Me: It has always been striking to me that an industry as big as agriculture in California relies so much on an undocumented workforce, and people — across the political spectrum — seem to agree to look the other way. I've often wondered what would happen if that changed.

Matt: Yeah. You're seeing the impact. There is, in fact, a shortage in the fields. I went out several times with crews working in the cantaloupes, and the average age of the people in the field has got to be ten, 15 years higher than normal. The majority seemed to be in their 40s and 50s. You would hardly ever see that. The reality is that this gigantic industry that feeds the bulk of the country, California agriculture, is still entirely dependent on this labor. So there's no easy out on that question.

Me: How do you work? Tell me about your process.

Matt: It's very slow. It's just visiting people, observing what's going on. Trying to absorb the tenor of life, you know? What things feel like. Visiting after school when the kids come home. On the weekends. Most farmworkers work six days a week at least. Sunday is always a big day. Cookouts and so on. I try to become a fixture of life.

Me: Is there anything that you hope people will take away from your photo essay?

Matt: To feel the humanity and the impact of what these policies are doing to people. Again, these are people who we rely on to keep us fed. My hope for the story is that it brings you closer to the reality of what their lives are like.

Doug

EDITOR IN CHIEF

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CORRECTION

Girls Trip *made more money than any Tyler Perry film, but not all of Perry's films combined. ("Almost Famous," August 5, 2018, issue)*

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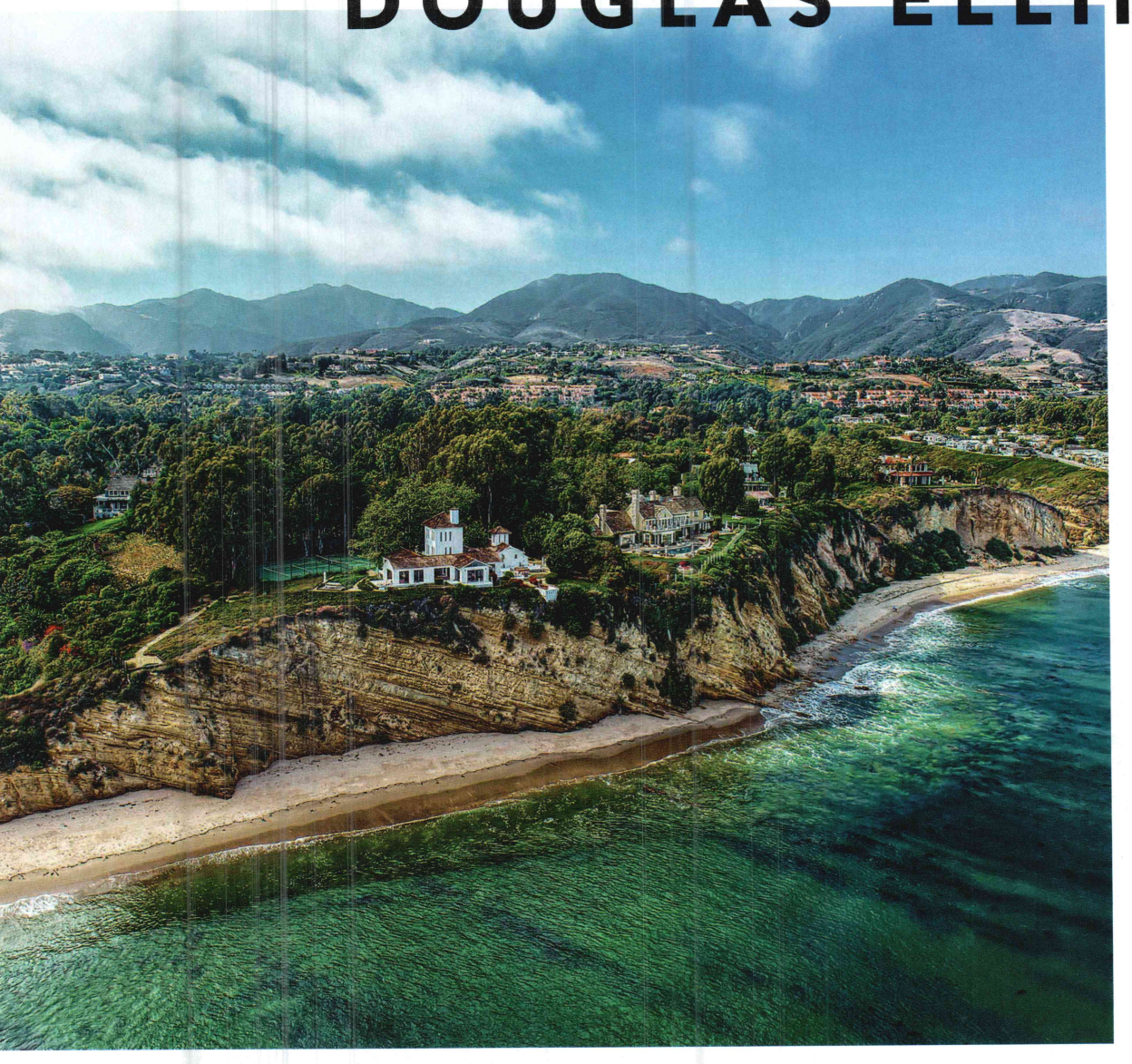

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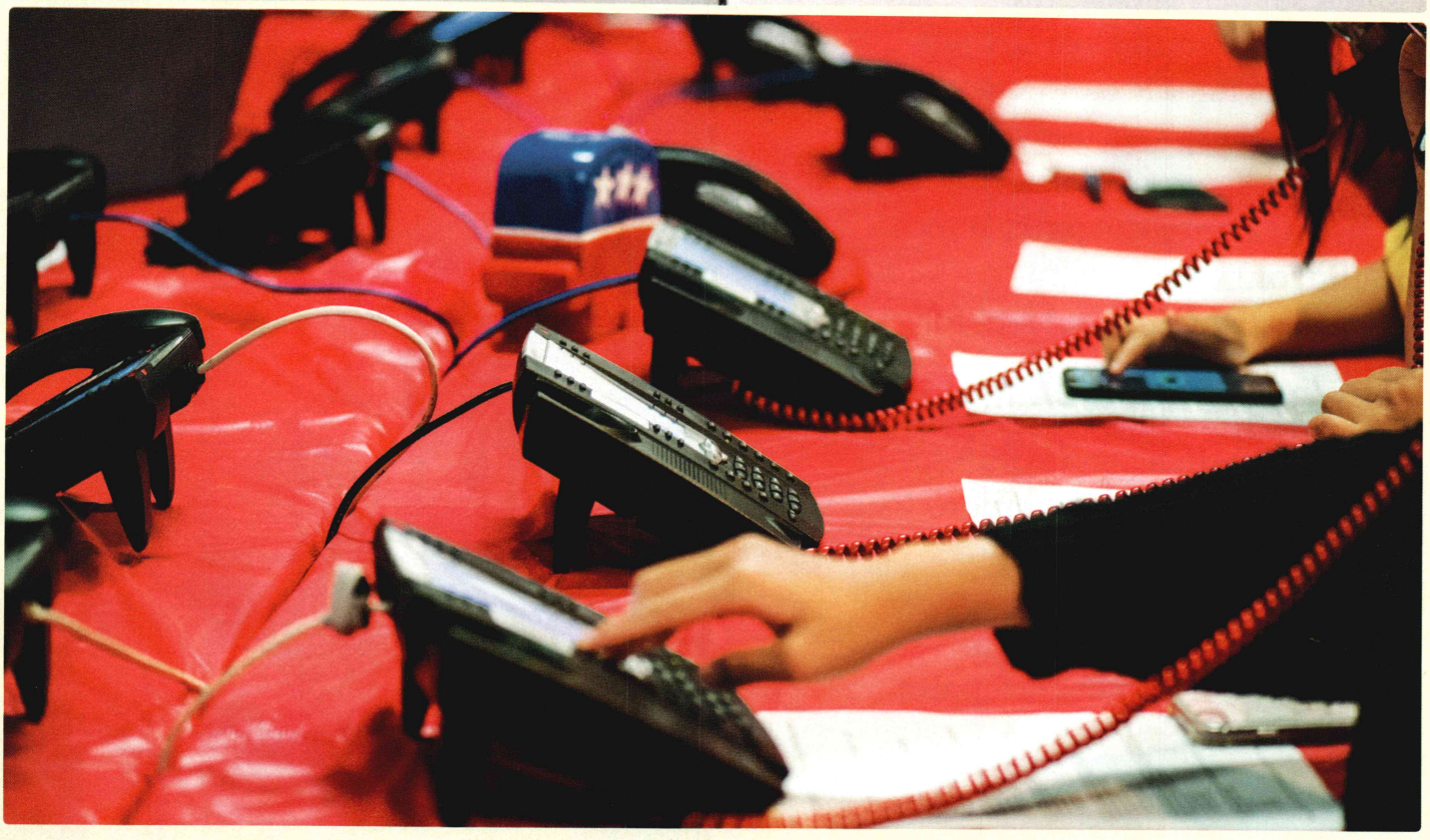
The Midterms



Photographs by Jessica Chou

By any measure, the stakes for this year's midterm elections are high. Will Republicans maintain their hold on Congress and continue to advance President Trump's policies? Or will the Democrats retake one or both chambers and thwart the president for the next two years? Nowhere is the outcome more contested than the American West, where at least 14 congressional seats and three Senate seats are up for grabs. Historically, opposition parties tend to pick up seats in midterm elections, and a set of trends — the increase in voting-age Latinos, a surge in female candidates, among others — is buoying the Democrats' chances. In Orange County, the party hopes to flip four congressional seats in districts that went for Hillary Clinton in 2016. In Arizona, Democrats have a chance to win a Senate race for the first time in a generation. And in Nevada, a moderate Democratic congresswoman is neck and neck with an incumbent Republican senator.

Scenes from one of the most fiercely contested races in California

Pounding the pavement with canvassers, campaign managers, phone-bankers, longtime voters, and first-time volunteers working on the congressional race between Young Kim, a Korean American Republican, and Gil Cisneros, a Latino Democrat, in California's 39th.

Interviews by Ben Christopher, CALmatters, and Haley Cohen Gilliland

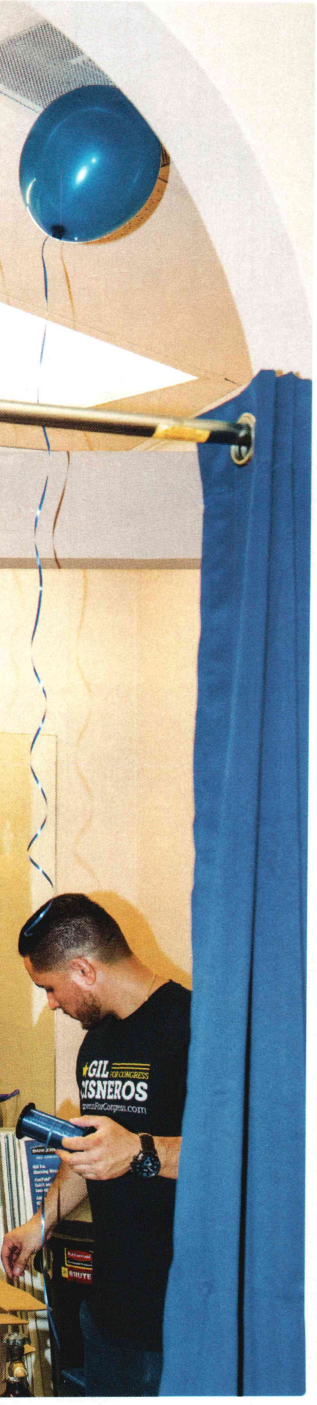
Volunteers prepare a Gil Cisneros canvassing event.

1 We're running against a guy who has millions more to spend. Because we're outgunned financially, we have to outwork him on the ground. We go to pretty much any community event we can go to. We've gone around and met with every city manager in the district. We've met with water boards.

— PATRICK MOCETE, CAMPAIGN MANAGER FOR YOUNG KIM

2 Every campaign has mailers. We have been intentional about translating them, getting Tagalog and Vietnamese translations, Chinese and Korean translations that we can distribute and give to people. For social media, the Korean American community uses KakaoTalk. Our Korean staffer has an account.

— NIC JORDAN, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY CAMPAIGN MANAGER FOR GIL CISNEROS

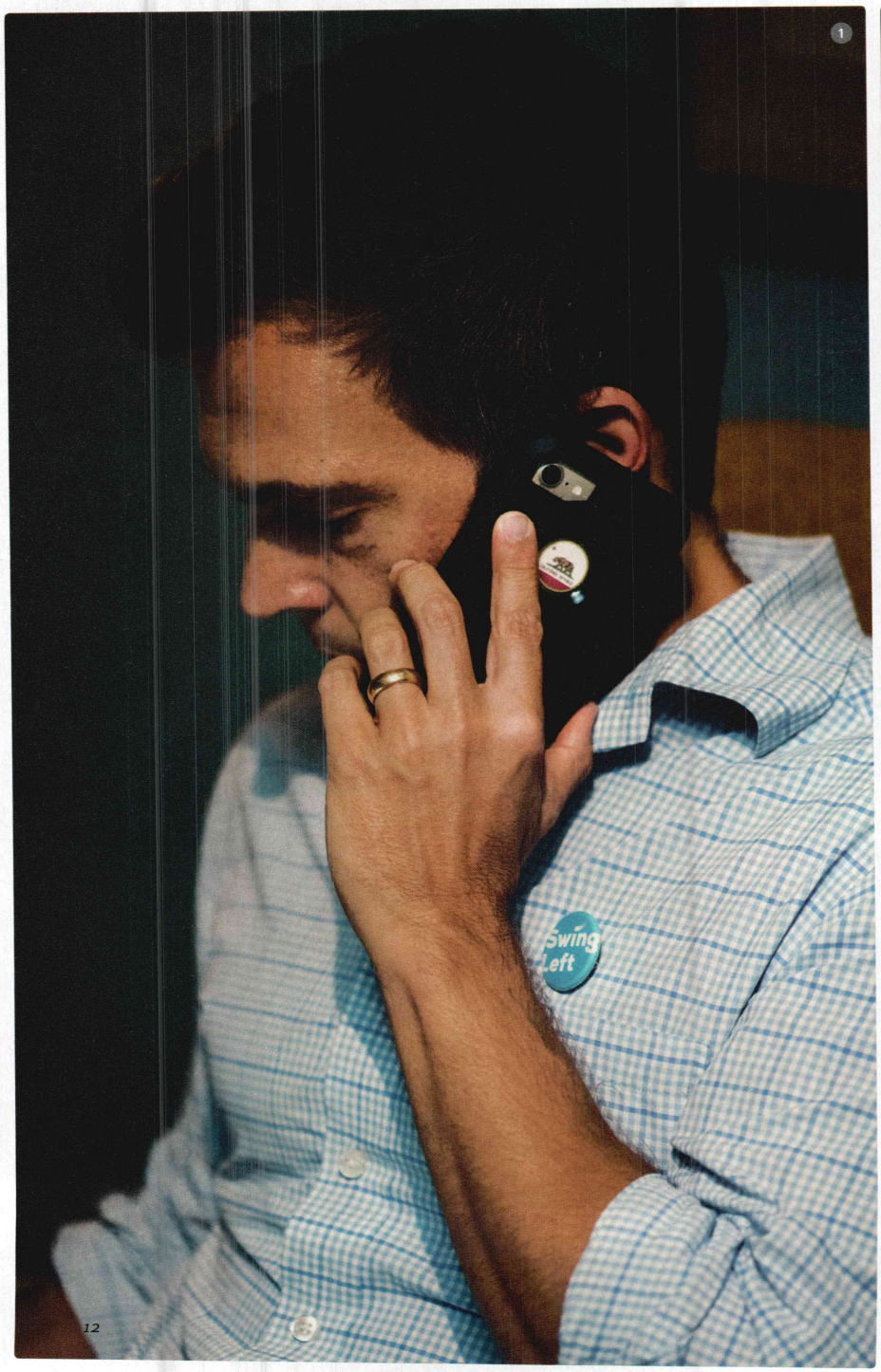


1 People who have never knocked on a door before might be a little nervous to do it. They think they're going to get in a big argument, and they don't want to argue with a Republican or whatever. First of all, we're not going to talk to Republicans. We're going to talk to Democrats. We're going to talk to "decline to state." Sometimes the data might be wrong, and we end up at a Republican's door, and we say, "Oh, thank you very much. Have a nice day."

— STEVE PIERSON, SWING LEFT ACADEMY PROGRAM MANAGER

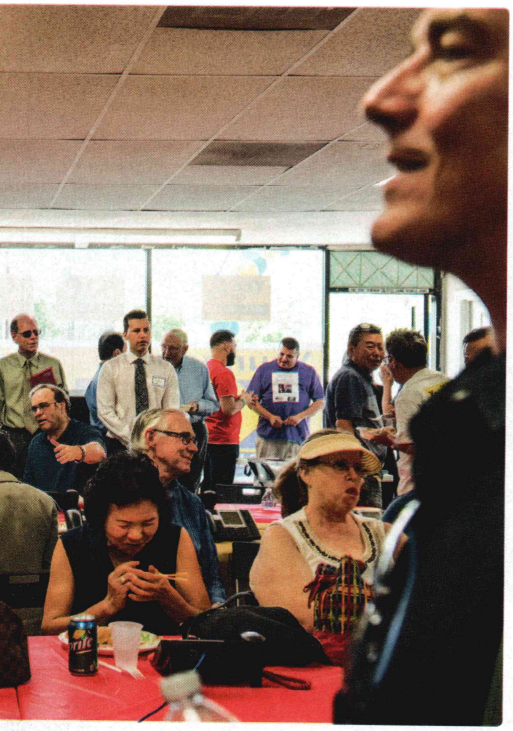
MIDDLE TOP
Volunteer phone-bankers for Kim

MIDDLE BOTTOM
Canvassers for Cisneros



2 The whole point of phone-banking is that you're trying to hook them to answer your question. So if you sound like a robot, they don't really want to talk. Typically, old people are the nicest. They always wish me a nice day.

— WILLIAM BUTLER, VOLUNTEER FOR YOUNG KIM

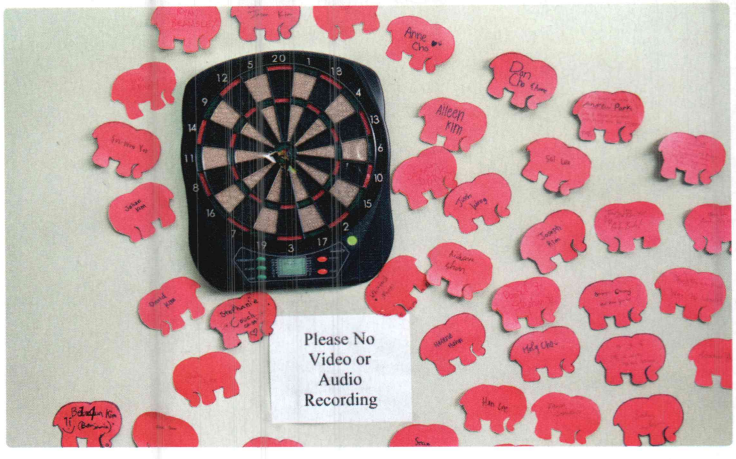


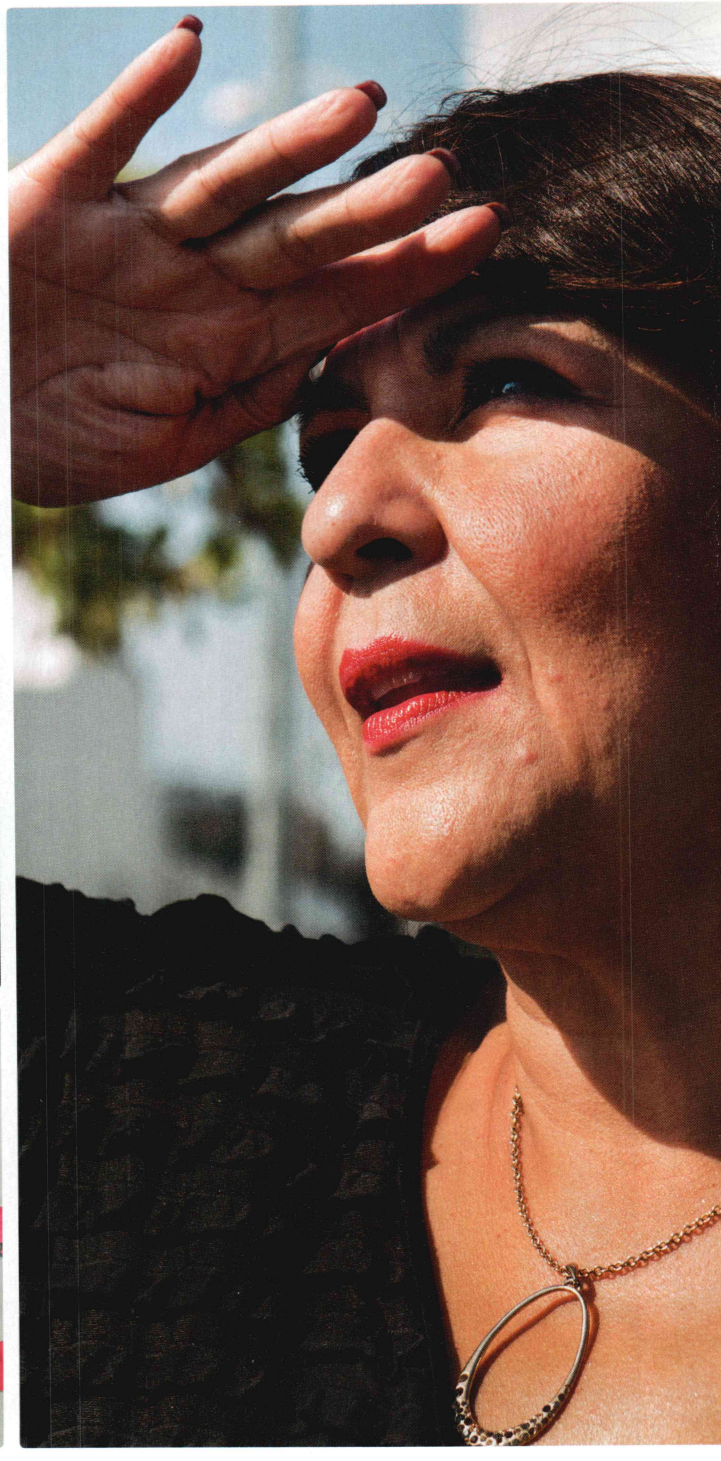
1 For years, there have been just Republicans on the Diamond Bar City Council, and I firmly believe that's why we're such a successful city. There's no liberals on there.

— TRISHA BOWLER, MEMBERSHIP CHAIR OF DIAMOND BAR REPUBLICAN WOMEN FEDERATED

2 People will tell me, "How could you be a Republican Hispanic woman? Don't you think you're selling out your people?" And I say, "I have three children who are going to be going to college. All my blood, sweat that I did, you want me to give it to somebody else?"

— ELVIRA MORENO, PRESIDENT OF THE NORTH ORANGE COUNTY REPUBLICAN CLUB





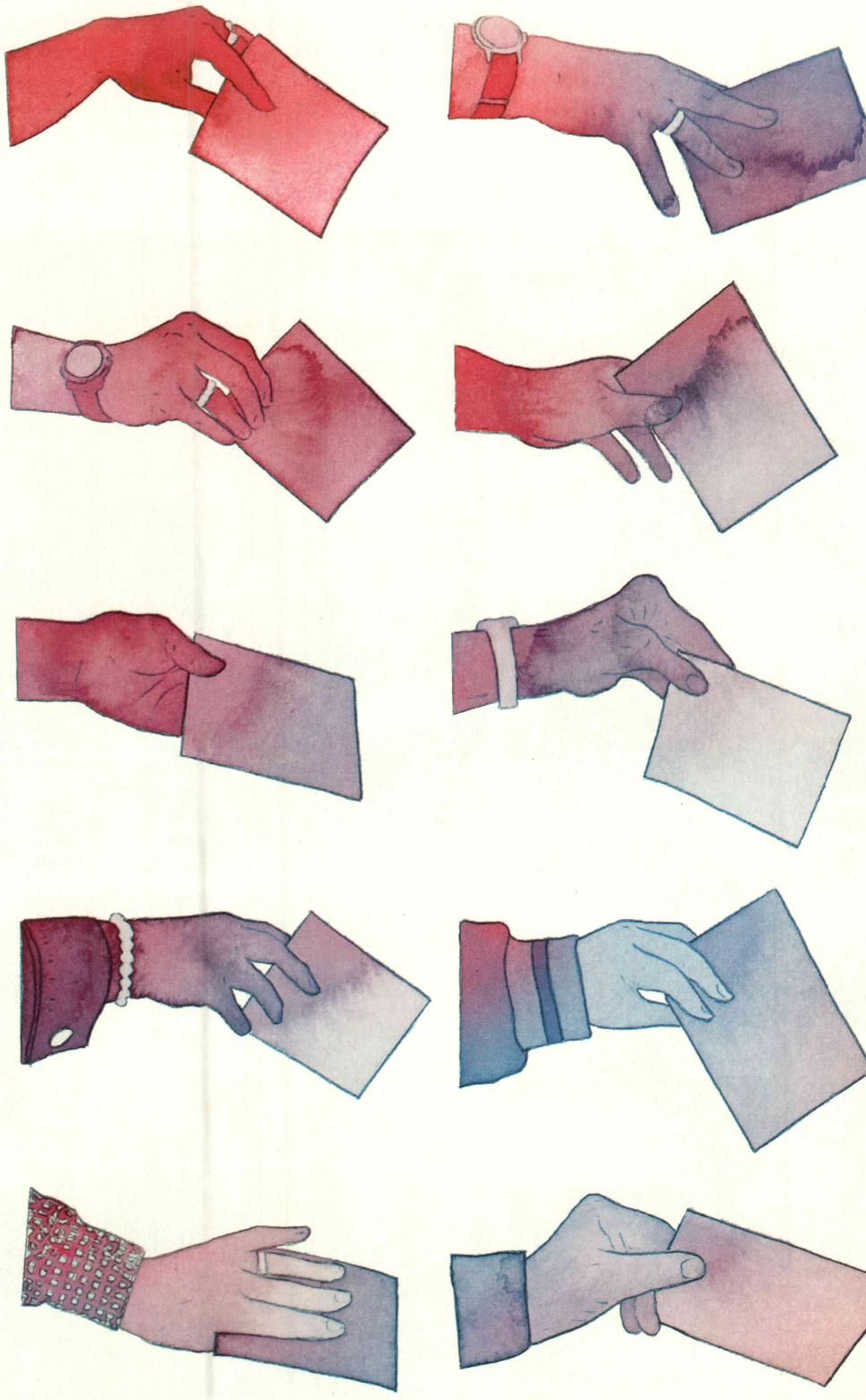
3 I'm not gonna pretend like I don't have any Republican friends, because I do. And when I talk to friends, I usually look at their social media posts, and if I see them complain about Trump, I go and tell them, "You know what you need to do, and you need to show up and vote." But I don't hammer them. If they are somehow racist, then we are unfriending.

— BEVERLY HEASLEY, VOLUNTEER FOR GIL CISNEROS

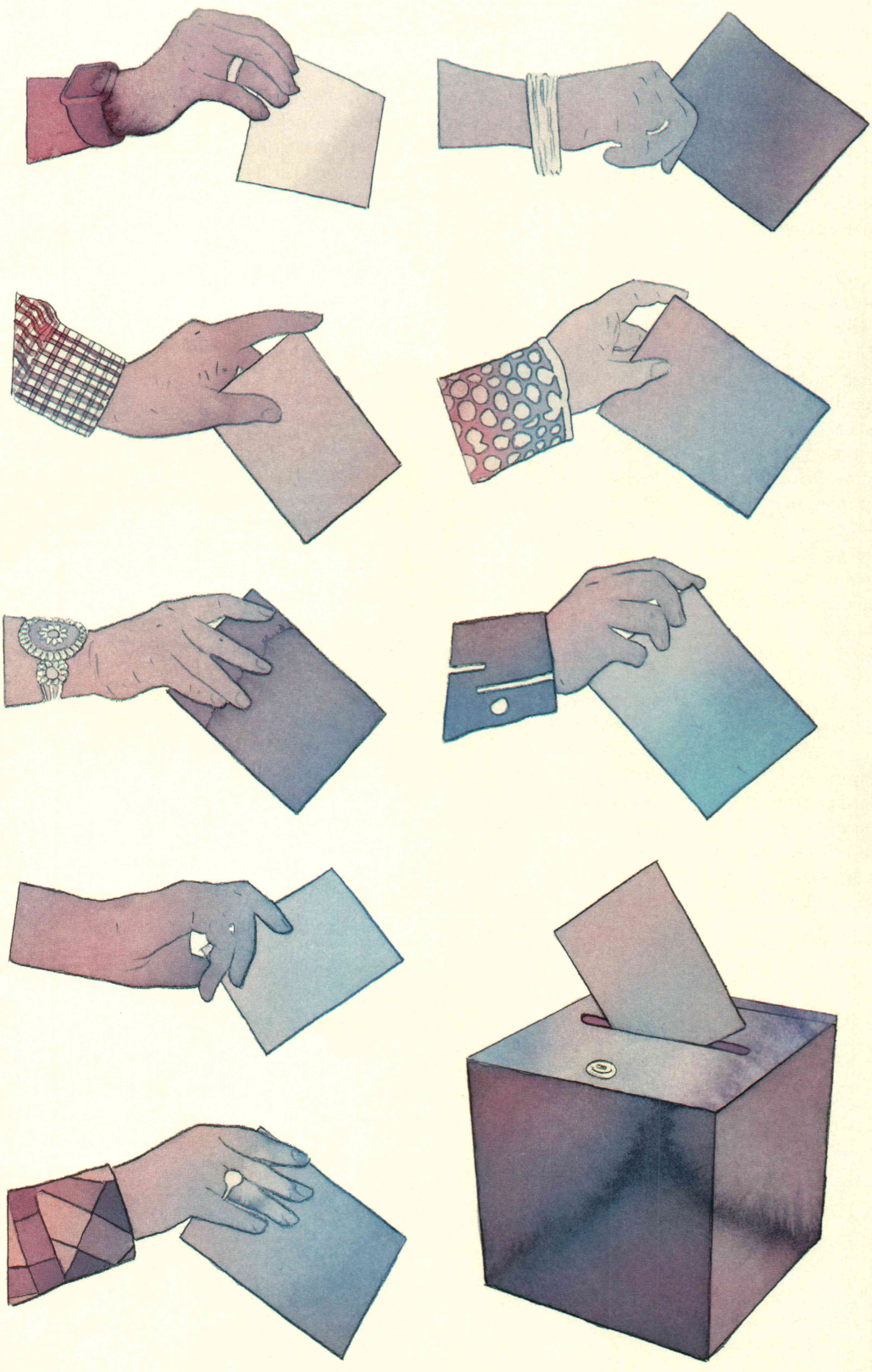
BOTTOM LEFT (2)
Kim's field offices
BOTTOM RIGHT
Volunteers at Cisneros's field office

How the once deep-red state of Arizona could become a toss-up

To better understand why Republicans may be losing their hold on Arizona, we asked two veteran strategists, one from each party, to share their insights on the inner workings of the state's politics and electorate. Chuck Coughlin has spent three decades serving as a consultant and adviser to Republican politicians in the state. Lisa Fernandez has run and advised campaigns at nearly every level of Arizona politics. Both have a lot to say about how this year feels different.



Interview by Andy Kroll
Artwork by Dan Gluibizzi



ANDY KROLL: You've got an open Senate seat. You've got Republican Governor Doug Ducey on the ballot. You've got competitive House races. You've got ballot measures on renewable energy, taxes. How do you see this election year?

LISA FERNANDEZ: Congresswoman Kyrsten Sinema is in a position to be the first Democrat to win an open Senate seat in 40-plus years. We have a Republican-controlled Legislature and a Republican governor, but the state is trending more progressive. With the increase in Arizona's population, the increase in Latinos, I think Democrats are a force to be reckoned with in 2020, and 2018 is a stepping stone.

CHUCK COUGHLIN: I see two highly dysfunctional parties that are narrating to smaller and smaller bases and primary electorates that tend to be more and more partisan and divided. Joe Arpaio successfully acted as a spoiler for Kelli Ward in the Republican primary for the open Senate seat and allowed Congresswoman Martha McSally to win. If it weren't for that, it would have been a much more competitive race.

On the Democratic side, you have a Senate candidate who has all but ignored her progressive base but has been running a campaign that is fairly appealing to a great many people. Anecdotally, I run into people who haven't known her — firemen and other people — who are like, "I really like her." →

FERNANDEZ: The biggest thing is our rapidly growing Latino community. With things trending the way they are, we'll be a majority-minority state by 2030. There's a fight within the Democratic Party: Are we going after these young Latinos as being the new wave of the Democratic Party, and if we do that, are we leaving behind white moderate voters?

KROLL: I want to focus on the Senate race just for a second. On the one hand, Sinema's putting out ads where she's speaking to the camera in Spanish. At the same time, she's not talking about abolishing ICE, which is something you hear in other primaries around the country. What does her campaign tell us about where the state's Democratic voters are?

FERNANDEZ: Her candidacy is saying that you still have to be a moderate to win statewide and win a Senate seat here in Arizona. I think abolishing ICE is an extreme measure of hyperpartisan politics and not the way immigration is viewed in Arizona.

KROLL: Turnout in the primaries set a new record for the state. What does that mean for November?

FERNANDEZ: Democrats are in a really good spot if this excitement and engagement continues. However, the electorate was still overwhelmingly older in the primaries — 50 percent of them were age 64-plus. We'll see if during the general election more younger voters are turning out.

COUGHLIN: There were a lot more contested races on the Democratic side than have historically been contested. They fielded candidates for nearly every race on the statewide ballot and fielded many more primary challengers in state races. The question is then how does that energy translate in the general?

KROLL: Chuck, what happens to that splintered Republican electorate in the general election?

COUGHLIN: They stay with McSally because Trump will be supportive of her. Do we bring Trump out here? There's fairly substantial portions of the electorate that find him unacceptable from a character standpoint. The Democrats are going to try to tie her tightly to Trump.

KROLL: Governor Ducey named former U.S. Senator Jon Kyl to fill John McCain's seat. What consequences will it have in November?

COUGHLIN: It's an extremely safe pick. It makes perfect political sense in this environment for Kyl to come forward and say, "I'll serve for this session," which ends in January. Then Ducey and Kyl put their arms around a prospective nominee whose name will be on the ballot in 2020.

FERNANDEZ: I agree with Chuck — it is a safe pick for Ducey. To me, what's telling is that he needed to make a safe bet. I think that tells us that Ducey knows this is going to be a tough election in November.

KROLL: So, Arizona: battleground state or no?

FERNANDEZ: Absolutely.

KROLL: Why?

FERNANDEZ: Clinton came within 91,000 votes of beating Trump here. She did one and a half points better here in Arizona than she did in Ohio, and we all know the money that was spent in Ohio. There wasn't much of an investment here. It was done pretty late in the game, and even with those factors against us, it was still a close race. I think that in itself has helped set the narrative that anyone who wants to be competitive on the presidential side in 2020 is going to have to go through Arizona.

COUGHLIN: Agree. Different reason, though. There's definitely a demographic shift happening in the state. We're ground zero on immigration. It's the most important issue on a federal level out here. Mexico is our largest trading partner.

KROLL: As of August 2018, Arizona had 1.1 million Democrats, 1.26 million Republicans, and 1.22 million registered as "other." How do you explain the rise of the "other"?

FERNANDEZ: There's been a rise in the "other" for the last decade. They're majority white, but there are Latinos, men, women, young, old, a lot of people who don't want to associate with one party. They are voting with a party a good portion of the time — they just don't want to associate with party politics.

COUGHLIN: I think this is why this is a battleground state, because we have a bunch of new voters. How do we get these people to participate? There's a great opportunity here to see who does a better job of that.

Mobilizing a new generation of voters in Nevada

Behind every political candidate — every stump speech, every handshake, and the endless cavalcade of visits with voters who might be swayed — you will find someone scheduling the meetings, writing the talking points, and generally making sure, to tweak a cliché, that the cars, buses, and planes are running on time. For Jacky Rosen, the first-term congresswoman from Nevada who is campaigning for Senate against Republican incumbent Dean Heller,

By Amanda Fortini

that person is Mariela Hernandez, her deputy campaign manager. "I'm making sure everyone's needs are being met and, obviously, that the congresswoman's needs are being met, that she's getting lunch and all that stuff," says Hernandez.

On a Saturday afternoon in mid-August, at a nondescript Las Vegas business park — the kind of place a disreputable lawyer or a shady cellphone-repair joint might set up shop — I arrive to find Hernandez standing in front of the Nevada Democratic Party's temporary field office. Hernandez is here for a "canvass launch," a gathering to thank volunteers for knocking on doors for Rosen; she is, as she puts it, "staffing Rosen" for the day, which essentially means shadowing her. It is 106 degrees, and I'm surprised to see Hernandez lingering outside. "I'm waiting to meet Congresswoman Meng" — the day's guest speaker — she says.

Grace Meng represents New York's 6th District and is also the vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee. Meng and Rosen are friends in Washington, but surely the reason Meng has flown across the country is that this is a pivotal midterm race — the Democrats are two seats short of a Senate majority. Heller is the only Republican senator up for reelection in a state that Hillary Clinton won in 2016, and political journalists like to call him the "most vulnerable Republican in the Senate."

The field office consists of two cinder-block rooms separated by a doorway hung with streamers — a reminder that politics is not a glamorous business. In the small interior room, around 40 organizers and volunteers are packed together. The crowd skews toward 20-somethings and retirees: those with an excess of idealism or time. As we wait for the congresswomen to appear, I hear talk of Nevada's political makeup. "It's real purple," an older woman says. The state has gone Democratic in five of the last seven presidential elections and the last three in succession.

For this reason, it's often said that Nevada is turning blue. What's more accurate is that Clark County — home to Las Vegas and roughly 1 million of Nevada's 1.6 million voters — is slouching toward that hue. This shift has been driven by a host of factors, among them the high unemployment rate and decimated housing market after the 2008 recession as well as the state's burgeoning Latino and Asian American/Pacific Islander populations (29 percent and nearly 10 percent, respectively).

Still, much of the state, particularly the large rural swaths outside of Las Vegas and Reno, has historically been red and remains so. As recently as 2014, Nevada's congressional

delegation was two-thirds red. Brian Sandoval, the state's popular two-term governor, is a Republican. Rosen herself hails from a swing district that went for Trump — she flipped the seat, beating her opponent by just over a point. Republican efforts in the state have been fueled by two powerful billionaire casino mogul donors, Sheldon Adelson and Steve Wynn, both of whom have close ties to Trump. In 2016, Adelson and his wife, Miriam, gave more than $50 million to Republican congressional candidates via super PACs and have donated tens of millions in this election cycle. Wynn was finance chair of the Republican National Committee until January, when he resigned in the wake of sexual-harassment allegations.

Although the Democrats have 65,000 more registered voters, progressives don't reliably turn out at midterms. ("If we can get that number below 50,000, we can't lose," Heller said in audio leaked from a Republican luncheon.) Heller, who's been in elected office for nearly 30 years and has never lost a race, also has the advantage of name recognition. Recent polls have shown an exceedingly close race, with the two candidates within a few points of each other.

"I KNOW IT'S HOT," Rosen, who has emerged from the backroom, says, the understatement of the century. "But it's heating up — not just the temperature — this election's heatin' up. There's about 80 days to go, my friends. And we have our work cut out for us." Rosen has a calm, focused, down-to-earth manner. She was the president of her Henderson synagogue, the largest in Nevada, and she often touts this life experience as preparation for politics, along with a waitressing stint at Caesars Palace, her work as a software consultant, and the years she spent navigating paperwork and bureaucracy as a caretaker to two sets of aging, ailing parents.

Rosen was recruited by Harry Reid, whose grassroots and voter-registration operation, the fabled "Reid Machine," is, in part, what turned Nevada purple — and is still going strong, despite the senator's retirement.

It's easy to see why the congresswoman was tapped: She's an uncontroversial candidate, a vanilla Democrat — pro-choice, pro-environment, pro-immigration, pro-Obamacare, in favor of expanding background checks for gun purchases — with a mere one-term voting record to scrutinize. An integral arm of Reid's organizing effort on the ground is the Culinary Workers Union, which has 57,000 members and represents, as its website reads, "the guest room attendants, cocktail and food servers, porters, bellmen, cooks, and kitchen workers" that make Las Vegas run. During the 2016 election, 150 union members were given a political leave of absence. They made phone calls, talked to fellow employees at casinos on the Strip, and knocked on more than 250,000 doors; they are again out in force.

Hernandez, who is 37 and was born and raised in Las Vegas, began as a desk assistant in Reid's Southern Nevada office in 2005 and worked for him as an operative in various capacities — including as a staffer in his D.C. office and on his 2010 reelection campaign — until he retired in 2015. She is also chair of a Reid-backed group called Latino Victory Nevada, the local chapter of the Latino Victory Fund, a national PAC geared toward identifying, recruiting, training, financing, and electing Latino candidates. "The long-term goal," Hernandez tells me at one point, "is really helping to create the people pipeline, not just for Latino candidates but for Latinos who are interested in working on campaigns."

Rosen, who underscores each point with her hands, continues: "I just was talking to some folks today, and they asked me a question. I'm going to ask it of you.... Tell us what Senator Heller is a champion for."

"Trump!" a voice in the audience says. During the past two years, Heller's reputation has become knotted up

with Trump's in ways that displease both the left and the right. During the 2016 election, Heller, long known as a moderate, was critical of Trump, saying he was "vehemently opposed" to him and that he "denigrates human beings." But he has gone on to vote in line with the president 92 percent of the time and does not seem to miss a photo opportunity at his side, which irks both fans and foes of Trump.

If there's one issue that brings Heller's predicament into focus, it's health care. Heller upset pro-Trump Republicans by initially opposing the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, which was perceived as undermining the president's agenda — a super PAC run by former Trump campaign staffers put out ads against him. The senator then went on to anger Democrats by voting for a version of the bill that would have repealed the individual and employee mandates but preserved Medicaid expansion, the so-called "skinny repeal." (More than 200,000 Nevadans have received Medicaid since the passage of the ACA, and Governor Sandoval had put pressure on him to protect it.) Heller, who rarely gives interviews, told *USA Today* that his aim was always "to protect Medicaid expansion here in the state of Nevada and at the same time get rid of the mandates," but his shifting stance was perceived as waffling.

Both candidates have critics on the left when it comes to immigration. Nevada has one of the largest immigrant populations in the country — nearly 20 percent of its residents. Another 17 percent are native citizens with at least one parent born elsewhere. There are also more than 13,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients in Nevada and 210,000 immigrants who remain undocumented. "One thing that's seen here quite a bit in Nevada is that you have families of mixed status," Hernandez, whose parents came from Mexico and were naturalized through the 1986 amnesty bill, tells me. "I have cousins who are Dreamers and cousins who are undocumented." Heller has said he supports DACA but also that he will not get behind any immigration bill the president won't sign. Rosen, for her part, upset progressives by voting in July for a resolution in support of ICE, one of only 18 Democrats to do so.

Rosen introduces Meng and remarks that in Washington they "live in the same building and have potlucks." Meng smiles wryly. "We have a little section on the House floor, mostly women," she says. "Sometimes we let men sit with us." The wilting crowd laughs. "This day job of ours is less than 20 percent women." Loud groans.

"We need to do so much more to elect women to the House and to the Senate," Meng says, "and here we have this amazing opportunity." Rosen is part of a historic surge in the number of female candidates this midterm cycle: 589 women filed to run for the House, Senate, or as governor, with roughly 40 percent winning their primaries in the 45 states that have held them. Nevada, too, is poised to make history; it could be the first state in the nation to elect a female-majority state legislature.

When the speeches end, the attendees swarm around Rosen, waiting to talk to her, shake her hand, take a photo. Hernandez hovers at her side, acting as factotum, iPhone photographer, and human file cabinet: collecting business cards, phone numbers, and names. ¶

"Papá, I don't
think you should go
to work today."

The dread and hope of migrant farmers and families

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT BLACK

TEXT BY DIANA MARCUM

The sky was tinted orange from fires burning in the Sierras. A man saddled an Andalusian mare at the beginning of the Joaquín Murrieta ride. The three-day procession celebrates the legendary Gold Rush–era Mexican Robin Hood, who stole from the rich to give to the poor. The ride began in the '70s as a way to draw attention to Mexican farmworkers living in abandoned camps with filthy water. This year there were protests of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's stepped-up raids on a new generation of mostly Central American farmworkers.

Three teenage girls, American-born daughters of migrants, led the marchers on a day so polluted and hot that there were warnings to stay inside. They chanted, "No KKK! No fascist USA!" Few people saw the group parading past cantaloupe fields, but it was the most visible outcry against a terror growing in California farm towns.

Undocumented workers are a part of life in the Central Valley. California agriculture employs at least 500,000 farmworkers, and an estimated 60 to 70 percent have fake papers. Most years, it's just an inside joke about how Benny got deported and came back Ricardo. But there are times when anti-immigration forces truly shake this region. Eleven years ago, raids destabilized the city of Mendota. The last straw for townspeople was when the father of a special-needs daughter was scheduled for deportation. "People got angry," recalled Joseph Riofrio, the former mayor. "They flooded City Hall. They said, 'No more. Not here.'"

This year, towns like Mendota feel under attack again. Within blocks of Riofrio's pool hall live two fathers and two young sons. One pair coming, one pair leaving. Rodrigo*, the Salvadoran father of 9-year-old American-born Julio, picks crops. He said he likes the fields because it's the natural world and he likes to use his muscles. But on some days, Julio tells him, "Papá, I don't think you should go to work today. I feel scared," and Rodrigo listens. He said there have been more raids in the past five months. His friend told him about a cousin

** Names have been changed.*

who was arrested during a sweep of a packing plant. The cousin protested that she had a baby son at home. The ICE agent asked, "How old is your baby?" The cousin told her, "Five years old." The agent said, "He's old enough to take care of himself."

Could this be one of the rumors that whips through fearful towns after each sweep? Rodrigo doesn't think so. He heard it from his good friend, who heard it directly from the cousin. It's hard to verify stories about ICE, a federal agency that operates under fewer requirements of public disclosure than local police. But both raids and rumors have caused lines at *notário* offices of parents wanting to name guardians for their children in case they are rounded up at work. About 12 percent of California schoolchildren have at least one undocumented parent, according to a 2014 Pew study.

Rodrigo is saving money to move to El Salvador with Julio out of fear of separation. They need to leave by the broccoli harvest, before Julio's Salvadoran passport expires. He knows going back is dangerous. In El Salvador, two of Rodrigo's brothers were killed by the army, two others killed and one wounded by gangs (in his box of keepsakes, Julio has a newspaper clipping about the murder of one of his uncles). Rodrigo's own father, a farmer, was killed by the army over a field of pumpkins he wouldn't relinquish. Rodrigo was 10 when his older brothers told him what had happened to their father, how all that was left was one boot and his hat.

Rodrigo arrived in Mendota nearly a dozen years ago with nothing but the clothes he was wearing: jeans and a ripped T-shirt. The farm contractor gave him a work shirt that was still damp with someone else's sweat. He married a woman from his village in El Salvador. They had a son. After the divorce, his ex-wife returned to their village with Julio. Father and son were so bereft, however, she agreed to allow them to live together in the U.S.

But if they stay now and Rodrigo gets deported, Julio could be left alone with no way to get to his family.

Until they leave, Rodrigo and Julio follow a strict routine. Rodrigo walks his son to the babysitter on his way to the fields. He leaves the house only to work and get groceries, except on the weekends, when father and son walk hand-in-hand to get an ice-cream cone.

But on this Saturday, Rodrigo has a bad feeling. He thinks they should stay inside. "Don't worry, Papá, you can use my passport," Julio told him. "And then you'll be safe."

They stay inside.

As Rodrigo and Julio plan their departure, Jorge and his son, Enrique, arrive in Mendota from Honduras. The look-alikes are both quick to smile. Jorge is freshly showered after picking corn all day. "How can you not enjoy working when you haven't worked in a long time?" he asked.

Jorge and 11-year-old Enrique were separated and detained in Texas in June after taking a bus through Honduras, walking through Mexico, and crossing the Rio Grande in a raft. Neither can swim. They thought the uniformed officers on the bank were there to help them if they started to drown.

Raids and rumors have caused lines at *notário* offices of parents wanting to name guardians for their children in case they are rounded up at work.

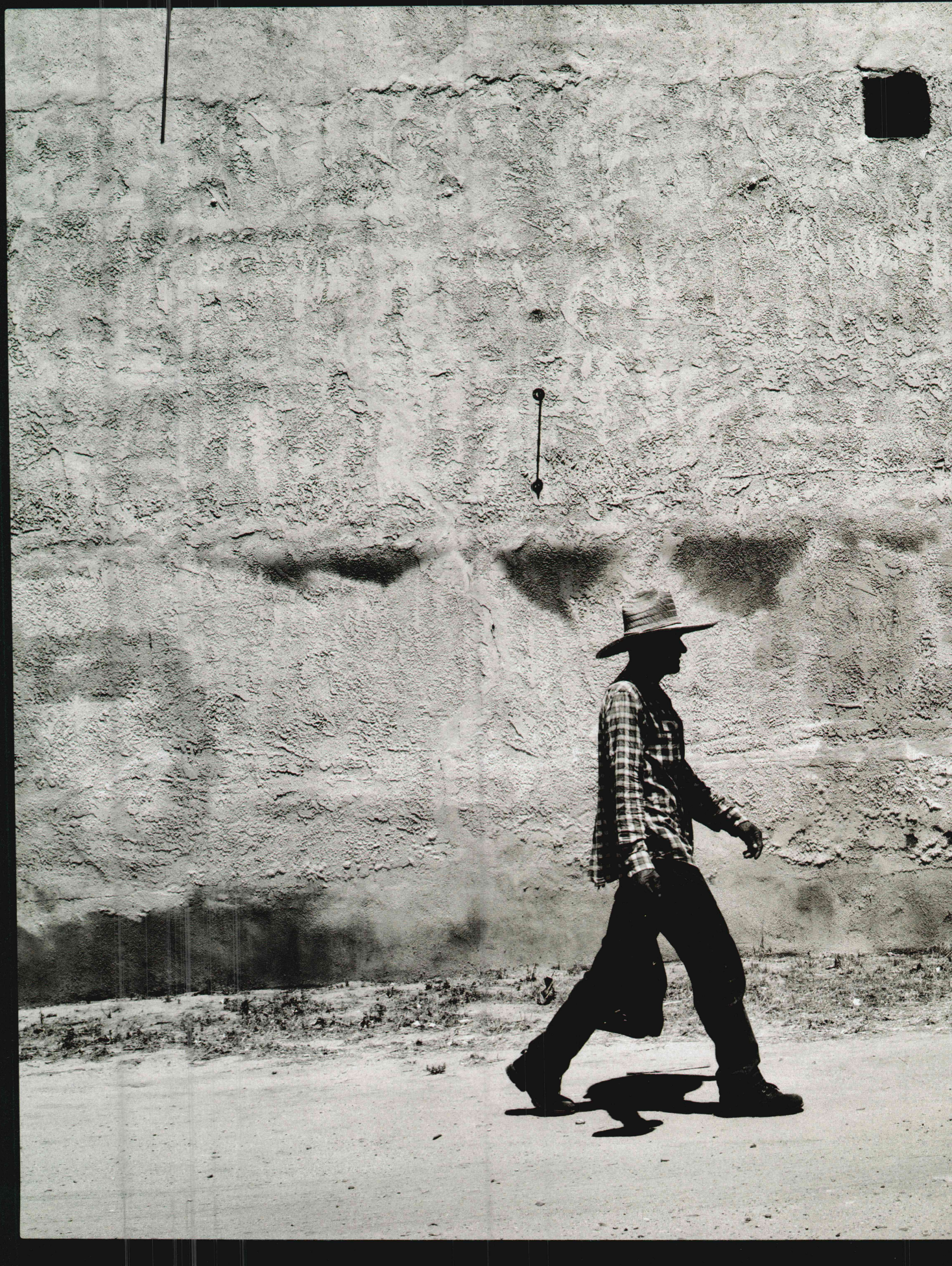
One officer calmly told the adults to get in one line and the children in another. They were taken to different parts of a windowless, walled facility. On the adult side, the men shared stories of their journeys — the bandits, the exhaustion, seeing people lose fingers and toes trying to hop a train.

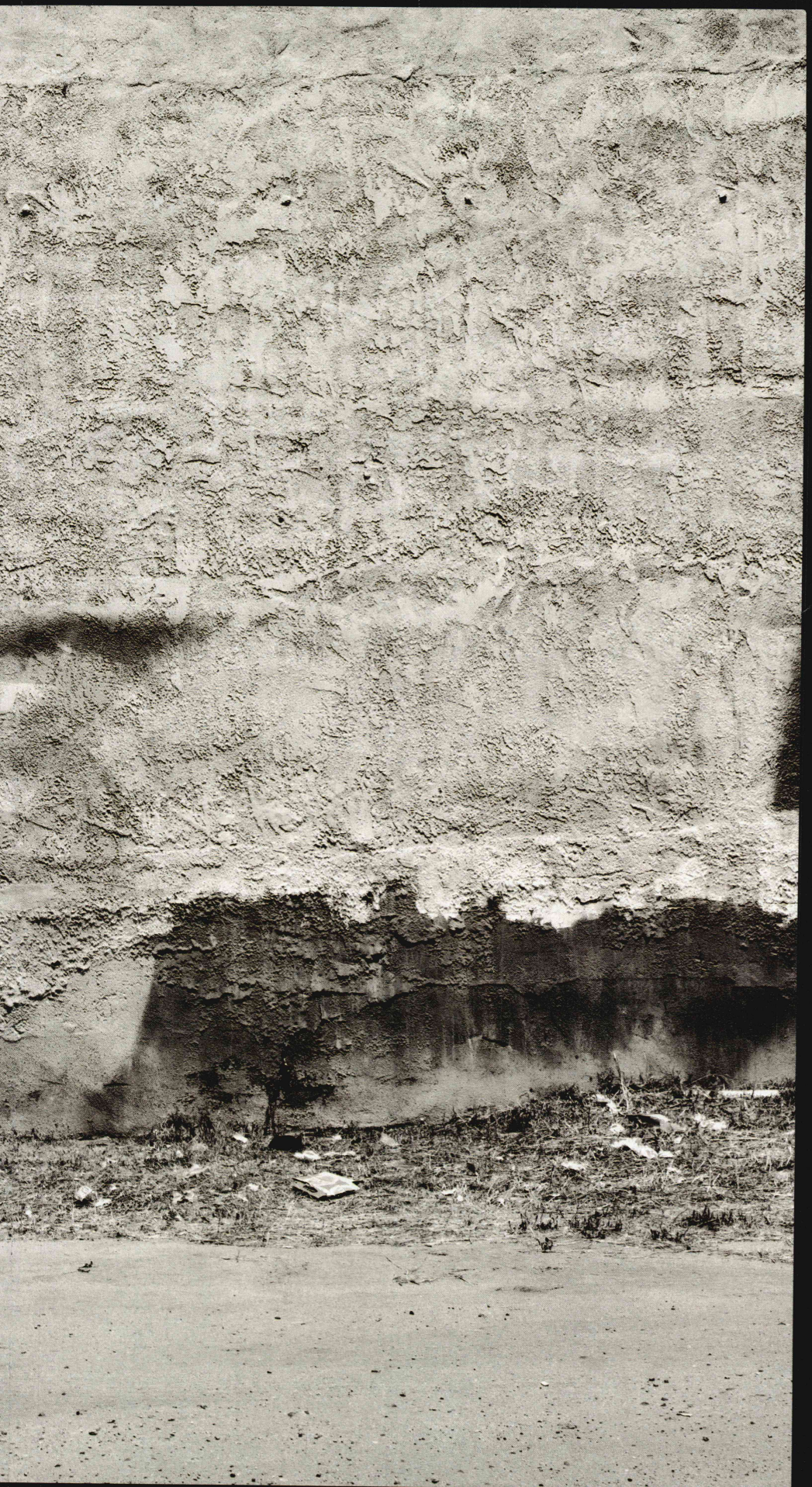
On the children's side, everyone was too afraid to talk. "One 6-year-old cried all the time and said, 'Where's my mamá? Where's my papá?' and we didn't know what to say, so we said nothing," Enrique said. "We were scared the guards would come."

After four or five days — they're unsure of the exact amount of time because they never knew whether it was day or night — Jorge was fitted with an electronic ankle monitor, and they were released.

Jorge said it was Enrique who most wanted to come to the U.S. "He has been saying, 'I want to go to school,' almost since he was a baby. The teacher told us he is very smart," said Jorge, who cannot read. He said it was hard to leave his wife and youngest child behind. But he and his wife were going without food so the children could eat, and still Enrique was going hungry.

Jorge expects to pay off the coyotes within six months while he sends money home. But he tells Enrique that he will work hard in the fields and Enrique will work hard at school and they will be no trouble to anyone. "One of my fears is being separated," he said. "But I have heard that if you respect the law, it respects you back. I think now things will be better for our family."





A man walks from
the store in the day's heat.

Women weeding a cantaloupe field. "The people who came to work, work," Jorge said. "They work regardless of how heavy it is."

Praying at the Huron Apostolic Church. For several weeks during the spring and fall, most of the lettuce sold in the U.S. is picked in Huron, a Fresno County town battered by drought and now immigration-enforcement fears.

Picking citrus during harvest. Forty workers at Bee Sweet Citrus packing plant in Fowler lost their jobs after federal immigration agents began checking records. Others left of their own accord in Fowler and across the Central Valley as word of the crackdown spread.

Rodrigo and Julio rent a small house and live with one other roommate, which is unusual for farmworkers, who typically live five or more to an apartment or house. "It's very expensive, but I didn't want my son living with a lot of men," Rodrigo said.

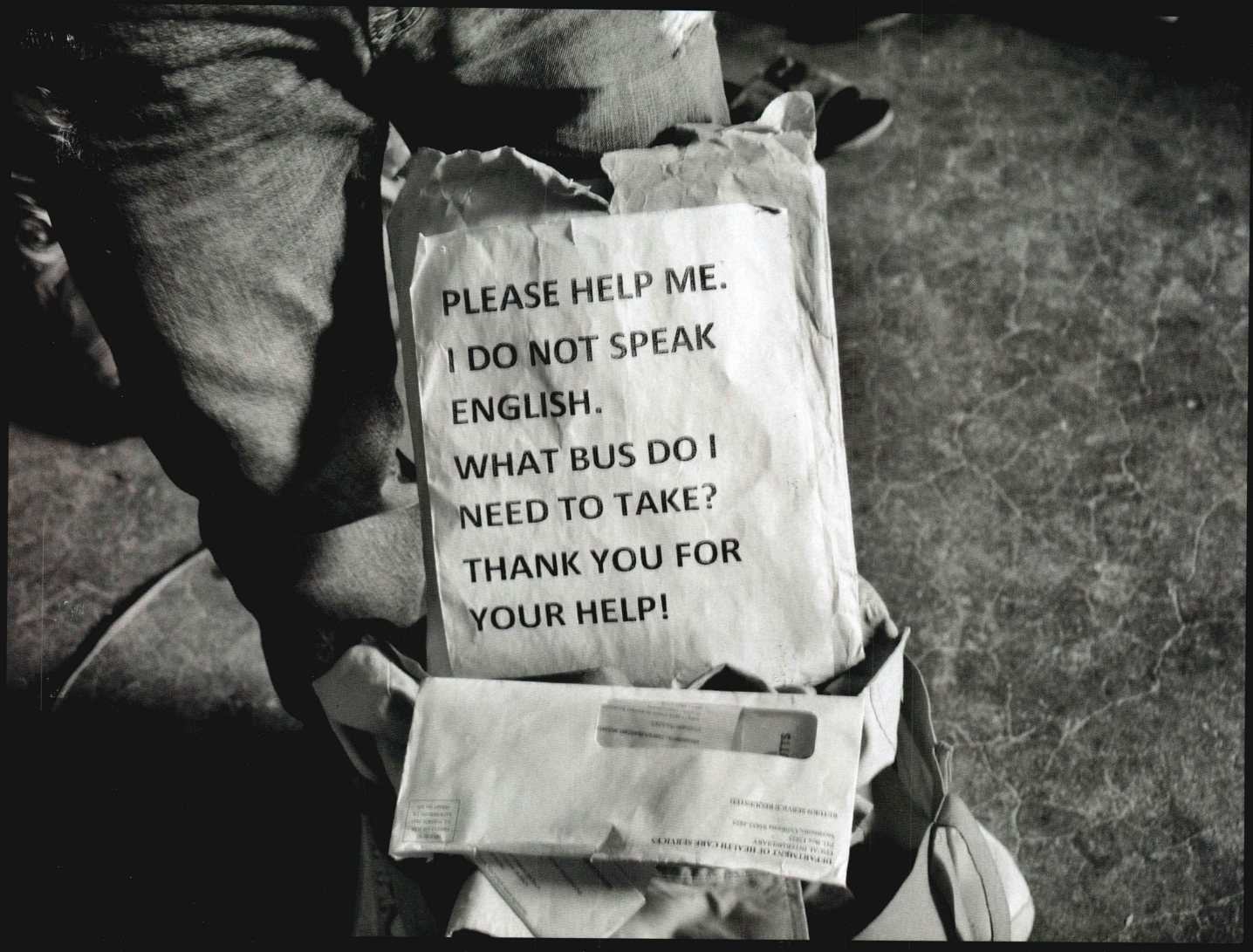
OPPOSITE
Rodrigo and Julio. "I am more afraid of the government of the U.S. than the gangs of El Salvador," said Rodrigo.

Julio's shadow. "My son is better here," his father said. "Better hygiene. He has shoes, clothes."

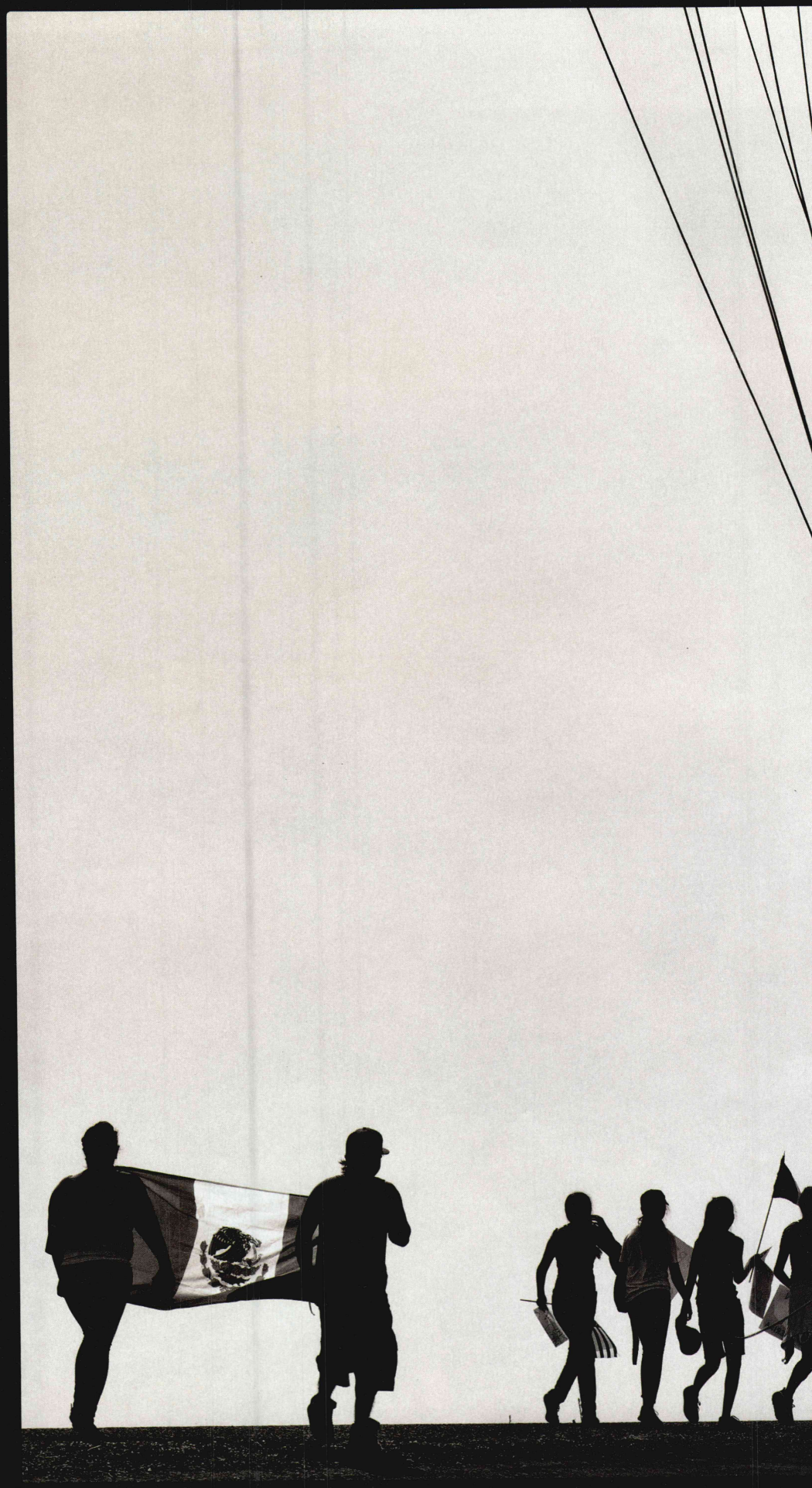
Jorge and his son Enrique. "When I was young like him, I would work with no food," Jorge said. "If they will let us be here, I hope that he has a better life. That he is a good person."

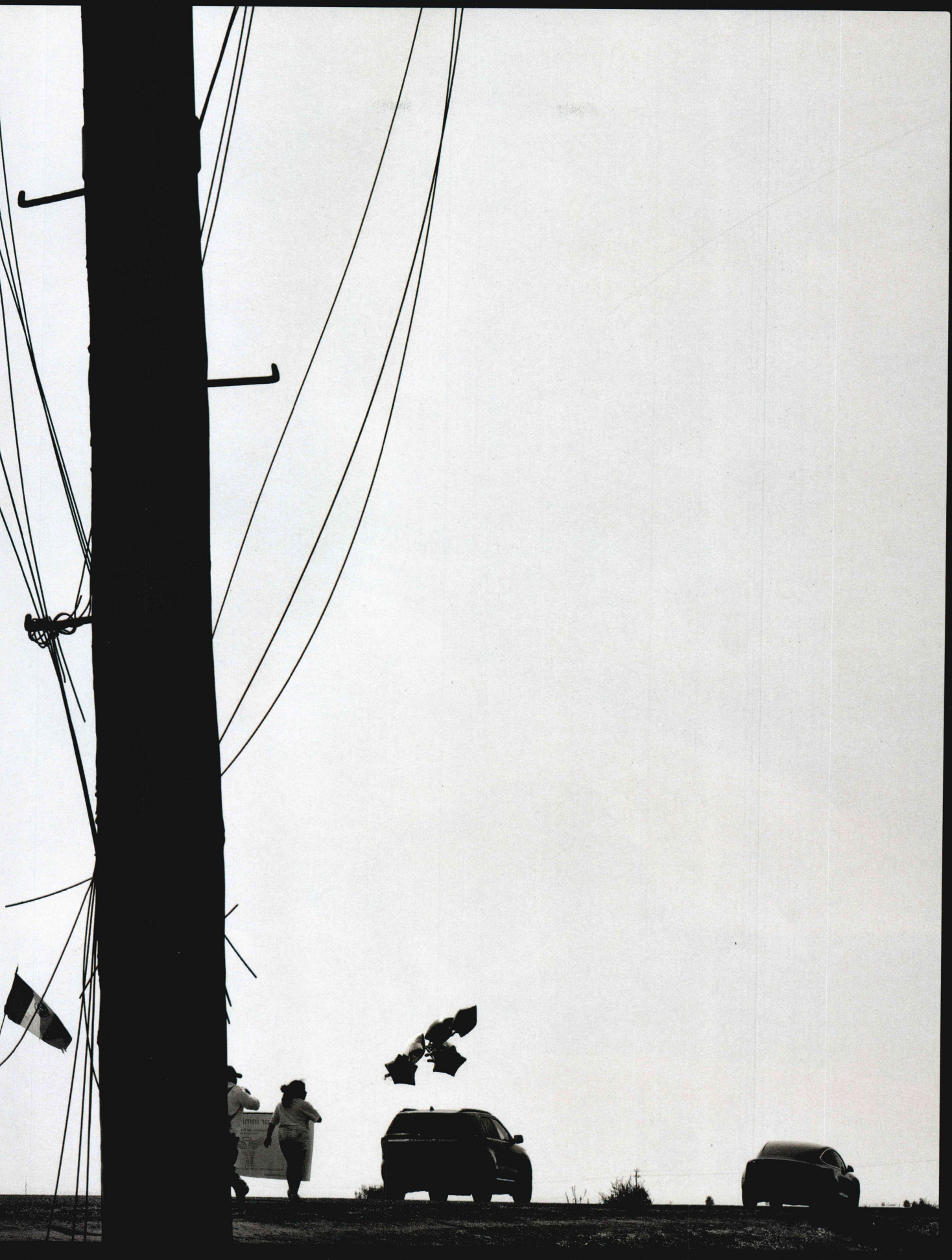
Jorge and Enrique share a rented room in a house where other single farmworkers live.

Jorge with the papers he was given after being discharged from immigration detention in Texas.



Protesting family separation at the Joaquín Murrieta memorial ride





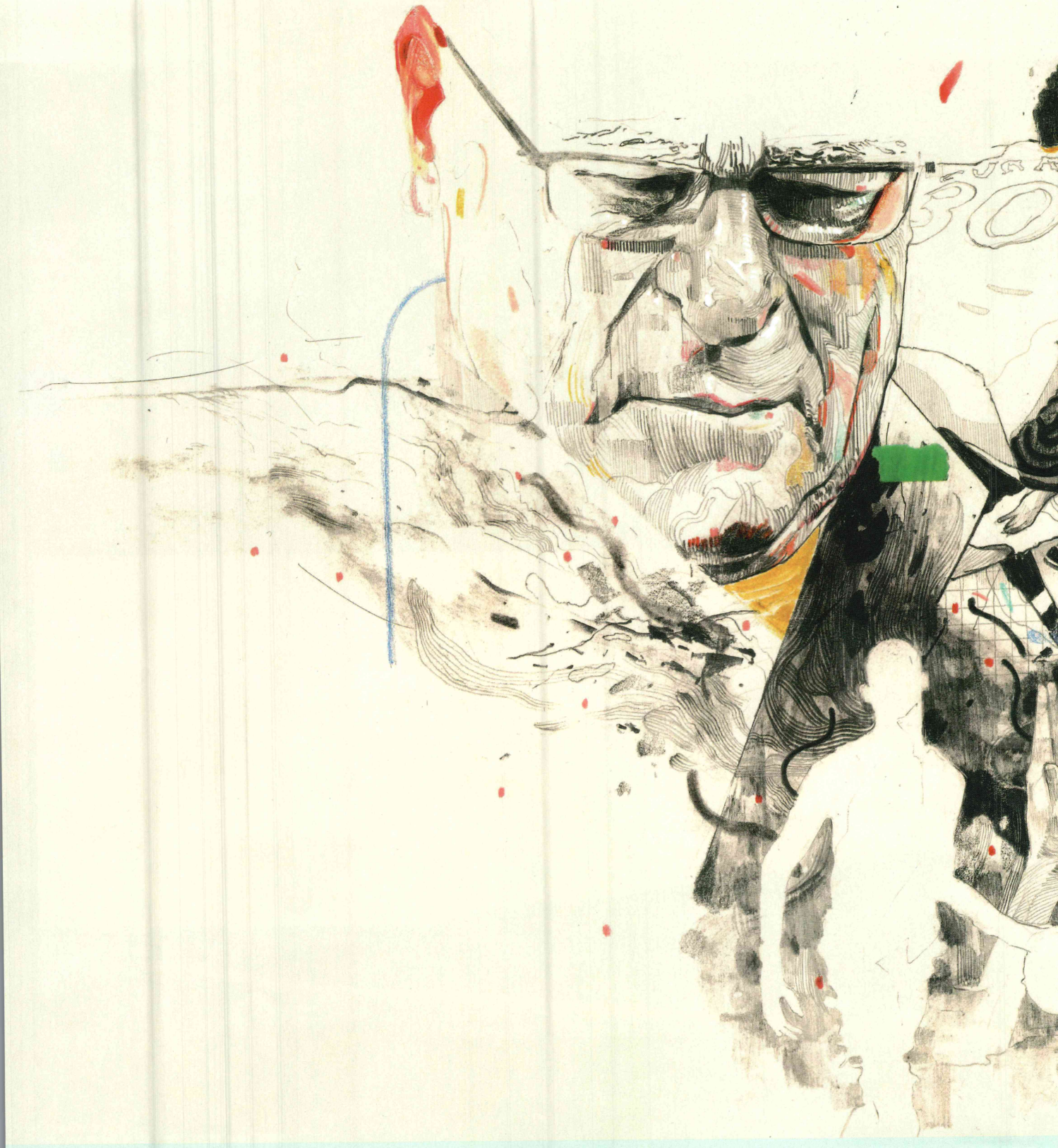
Julio, fearing an ICE raid, has become more reluctant to leave their home.

A Salvadoran immigrant was affixed with an ankle monitor after she crossed the border near McAllen, Texas, in March.

MATT BLACK is a photographer who has traveled over 100,000 miles across 46 U.S. states for his project *The Geography of Poverty*. An associate member of Magnum Photos, he received the W. Eugene Smith Award in 2015. He lives in Exeter, a small town in California's Central Valley.

DIANA MARCUM is a Pulitzer Prize–winning *Los Angeles Times* writer and the author of *The Tenth Island: Finding Joy, Beauty, and Unexpected Love in the Azores.*

Photography was supported in part by The Economic Hardship Reporting Project.



The Road to Dynasty

Favored to win their third straight championship, Steve Kerr's Golden State Warriors face more adversity than fans realize. Kerr speaks with his former coach Phil Jackson — who led two teams to 11 NBA championships — about surviving success.

INTERVIEW BY KIT RACHLIS

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES CHIA HAN LEE

When Steve Kerr joined the Chicago Bulls as a guard in 1993, he began a relationship with Phil Jackson that's been one of the most important in his life — coach, teacher, mentor, and, now for many years, good friend. The Bulls under Jackson would win three consecutive NBA championships before Kerr left in 1998. Jackson would go on to coach the Los Angeles Lakers, which he led to five championships in the 2000s, making him the winningest coach in the history of the league. Since Kerr was hired to coach the Golden State Warriors four years ago — he had never coached in the NBA before — his success has been nothing short of Jackson-like. The team has won three championships and, in the view of many, changed the way the game is played. Thoughtful, outspoken, attuned to social media, a creative basketball mind, someone who's keenly aware of the pressures that society puts on modern players, Kerr would be the first to say that Jackson has been a major influence in how he thinks about the game and how he leads. On the eve of the new season, the two discuss what they've learned from coaching over the years.

CALIFORNIA SUNDAY Phil, Steve's in a place where you've been four times — the chance to win an NBA championship three seasons in a row as a coach. What advice would you give him?

PHIL JACKSON With the duration of the season, you have to allow your players to feel their way back into the game, because they've been stretched. I thought last year Steve's team showed the wear and tear of those past years. They've been going at this for four years[1], and the injuries are starting to become more frequent, and age is starting to tell. They have to come back and really find their path, and the players know this.

CS Steve, you have pointed out on a number of occasions that success creates a different set of challenges than struggle. What strategies have worked for you and what strategies have not worked for you during the team's run?

STEVE KERR Well, I can tell you that one that did not work for me was when I blasted the team publicly last season. I was very forgiving all season long for the reasons Phil mentioned. It's a long year, and players were tired, and they had shown some vulnerability. We were near the end of the season. We had four or five really bad games in a row, where I felt our effort was basically nonexistent. I was really worried, because the playoffs were coming up, and I let them have it[2], both in the locker room and then with the press later on, right after the game in Indiana. And that didn't work. Our players were not happy. My assistant coaches came to me, and they said, "You got to pull that one back."

That's something that might have been more effective 20 years ago than is possible now. So I have to recognize that. Going into this season, I think it's only going to be that much more difficult to rein in my frustration, knowing full well that these guys have expended so much over the last four years. I've got to give them a lot of leeway, and I've got to be extremely patient, but we're all competitive. We all want to win. So, when do you kick a little bit and try to give them a little boost and when do you back off? That's what you have to figure out as a coach.

JACKSON Bringing on a very volatile player who's very talented and a surprising addition to your team — DeMarcus Cousins[3] — has given you some new things to conjure up as far as coaching and taking a load off some of the other scorers.

KERR For sure. Cousins is going be a big addition in that regard. It'll be an intellectual challenge that our core players, I think, will really enjoy. It'll look different. It'll feel different, and I think they need that. I'm also very tempted to change the format of practice. You know, we've been pretty consistent with four lines[4], the fundamental stuff. We've had a format that's worked for us, that our guys are very versed in, but I feel like we should explore a completely different type of practice just to keep

1
In reaching the Finals for the past four years, the Warriors played 83 additional games, the equivalent of an entire season.

2
"I'm mad. I'm embarrassed," Kerr told reporters. "I know that this game doesn't mean anything in the seedings. But the playoffs start next week. It's an embarrassing effort and a pathetic effort."

3
One of the most prodigious scorers in the league, Cousins signed a one-year contract with the Warriors over the summer, which surprised many observers because his type of play doesn't seem to suit a team that shares the ball and already has three prolific shooters in Steph Curry, Kevin Durant, and Klay Thompson. He is also considered one of the most mercurial players in the league.

4
A drill that begins every Warriors practice and emphasizes such basics as jump stops, pivots, and chest passes

our guys' minds fresh. I might call off shootarounds[5] this year.

JACKSON Have you made any additions to your coaching staff, Steve?

KERR No. We haven't had much turnover at all the last couple of years, so that's a concern as well. I think we could actually use a little bit of a change in that regard, but you can't always dictate that.

CS Phil, is there a moment that taught you the most as a coach?

JACKSON It was the second year of the Bulls' first three-peat run, and we had a playoff game in Philadelphia. My coaching experience was different than the present-day one. We had a lot of militaristic kind of training. Bobby Knight[6] was one of the heralded coaches during the '80s and '90s who exemplified the idea of the coach as commanding officer, as the general. One of my assistant coaches had been a gunner ensign in World War II. He called one of the players off the floor, and he said, "Coach Jackson needs a whipping boy[7]. I know you want to serve your team best. Are you willing to stand up to that kind of pressure?" And the guy said, "Yes, sir. You know, sir, I'd like to do that." And that's how I used this player, who is a sensitive person. But in the playoffs against Philadelphia, he broke down.

That led to a change in my philosophy as a coach. I read *Positive Coaching*[8]. It wasn't even a book. At that point, it was a manuscript that was sent to me by Rich Kelley[9], and I changed my tactics with this player, and we had a relationship that changed significantly. One of the things about coaching in this day and age is that it's much more about a positive connection with players.

KERR I think that's dead-on. One of the things that I learned from Phil was how important it was being funny watching game film, editing stuff in from movies[10]. Nobody I had ever played for had ever done that, and, to me, that was such an effective way of getting a message across. When you could tie together the point you're trying to make on the basketball floor with a humorous message coming from a movie — when the message is clear and it carries over to what you're trying to teach — you're not having to either kiss up to the player or criticize them. You're just telling them something, but you're using humor. I thought that was part of Phil's genius, and it's something that we try to employ all the time. It's a lot easier to do now, too, because you've got modern technology, and three or four people are in the video room. Phil, you did that yourself, didn't you?

JACKSON Yep. I did.

KERR I'll give you an example. Last year, we came down on a two-on-one, and Draymond Green had the ball. Steph Curry runs to the 3-point line. Draymond has a dunk if he wants it, because the defender runs to Steph, but Draymond passes up a dunk and throws it to Steph, and Steph misses the 3-pointer. I'm looking at my coaches like, "What the hell are we doing? Just please take the 2-pointer." So what are my options to tell Draymond? How are we going to do this creatively? What we decided on the next day at practice was to show a video on playing blackjack. It was about splitting 10s[11], and the audio says, "Never, ever split 10s. Why would you ever give up a winning hand just to try to get two better ones?"

The message from the video was so obvious. The guys loved it, because they all like to play cards. They got a good laugh out of it, and Draymond laughed. That was to me the kind of stuff I learned from Phil — that there are different ways to get the message across, that if you're creative enough, then they're not going to get sick of your voice and they're not going to get sick of you saying the same things over and over again.

JACKSON You know, I was thinking about Cousins and how he's a guy that's shown a lack of — what's a good word to use for this? — impulse control[12] in his career. On the Bulls we had someone

"I think where the NBA's gone right is the leadership works closely with the players, whereas the NFL has conjured up ways to create this false patriotism and pandered to their fan base." – STEVE KERR

5 An informal practice session, usually on the morning before a game

6 The longtime basketball coach at Indiana University, Knight was famously combative. He once threw a chair onto the court in the middle of a game and, in 2001, was fired for choking a player during practice.

7 The player who receives the bulk of criticism. In theory, this motivates the members of the team to rally around him and bond. The player was forward Horace Grant.

8 Jim Thompson, a former director of the Public Management Program at Stanford's business school, published *Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem Through Sports* in 1993 as a manifesto and manual to change how youth sports was taught in the United States. He went on to create the Positive Coaching Alliance. Jackson serves on its advisory board.

9 Kelley played 11 seasons in the NBA. He and Jackson were teammates on the New Jersey Nets in 1979–80, Jackson's last year as a player.

10 Among the films Jackson spliced into game footage were scenes from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *Hustle & Flow*.

11 In blackjack, or 21, when a player is dealt a pair, he or she can "split" them — that is, treat them as two separate hands. With two 10s, however, the odds of improving the hand are extremely long.

12 In the course of eight years, Cousins has racked up 118 technical fouls, the most by any player during this time, and been ejected 13 times. He has had a number of run-ins with coaches, which has led to numerous suspensions. In 2017, the NBA fined him $50,000 for "directing inappropriate language towards fans on separate occasions."

similar — Dennis Rodman. Both feel like they're picked on by referees and officials and the league and so forth. Draymond Green's a little bit like that, too. It gets into a little bit of an attitude.

What may be needed is officially declaring that we're going to work on mindfulness. The first season that Steve came to the Bulls organization, we got a guy named George Mumford[13] involved in doing mindfulness training. I thought that was a really important thing — to bring a different feel, a different attitude, a way of trying to let things go on the court and move forward. What we do as coaches a lot of the time is try and get guys to refocus, and that kind of training is an aid in that.

KERR Yeah, that was some of the best stuff that I ever experienced as a player, and the reason it worked was it was so authentic to you and your personality, Phil. It's been something that I've struggled with a little bit as a coach, trying to find the right person to help the team. One year we had a guy who was really good. He was with the Navy Seals[14], and he came in and worked with our guys, both individually and as a team. We did some mindfulness training. I think the guys really respected him and liked him, and then he ended up taking a full-time job elsewhere. It's tough to find the right person. You can't just throw anybody out in front of a group of NBA players.

CS Steve, you spend your time helping people learn and grow. Where do you go to learn and grow, and where do you think you most need to learn and grow?

KERR First, my playing career was about as strong an apprenticeship as anybody could possibly have if they wanted to get into coaching. I mean, I played for four or five Hall of Famers between Phil, Lenny Wilkens, Gregg Popovich, Lute Olson, Cotton Fitzsimmons[15]. I share a lot with other coaches, and I've sought out advice from coaches in other sports. Pete Carroll's[16] become a friend, and whenever he's in Oakland, we try to get together when the Seahawks play the Raiders. I think he's somebody I have learned a lot from.

I remember Phil walked into practice one day and said, "Anybody watch the Clipper game last night?" This is when the Clippers were rock bottom, and we all sort of looked at each other. "Of course we didn't, Phil. We got better things to do." But now I get it. I watch all the games. I watch what other teams are doing. I pick up out-of-bounds plays and steal them from other teams. The league is like that. Everybody steals from each other.

CS The objective of coaching, of course, is winning — that's how you guys are judged. But both of you have always seen your role as more than that — that you're also helping young men, mostly young black men, have "a greater understanding of themselves," to borrow a phrase from Rick Fox, a Laker who played for you, Phil. What does that obligation entail?

JACKSON Sports portrays all the character that an individual has, particularly basketball. Football has helmets and pads, and you're not seeing guys cuss at each other, whatever they're doing inside the pileup of bodies. Baseball has no contact. Basketball's very open. You're in your underwear playing this game, and you can't hide. The fans are just sitting there 15 feet, 10 feet, 6 feet off the court.

Plus, we have all the other things that go on in our society. You know, Steve has taken up the call about guns[17]. One time we had a player on the Bulls, Scottie Pippen, who was found with a gun in his car[18]. So the team had a talk about guns and about why. Who carries guns? Are you afraid? Are you being protective? Guns bring their own violence. So many things happen in our society because the anger's too hard to contain for a lot of individuals, and if they have a gun, they use it.

We talked about Gandhi's influence, of the value of nonviolent protesting, of carrying a different energy

"Sports portrays all the character that an individual has, particularly basketball. You can't hide. The fans are just sitting there 15 feet, 10 feet, 6 feet off the court."
— PHIL JACKSON

13
Mumford was a high school basketball star, but injuries curtailed his playing in college. He went on to enroll in a mindfulness-based stress-reduction program and found the Inner-city Stress Reduction Clinic. Jackson recruited Mumford in 1993 to teach meditation techniques to the Bulls.

14
Chris Johnson, who in 2015 worked part time as a team psychologist for the Warriors while also running the Navy's Operational Neuroscience Lab in San Diego

15
Kerr played for Wilkens at the Cleveland Cavaliers, Popovich at the San Antonio Spurs, Olson at the University of Arizona, and Fitzsimmons at the Phoenix Suns.

16
Carroll coaches the Seattle Seahawks, which won the Super Bowl in 2014. Before joining Seattle, he coached at USC, which he led to a national championship in 2003 and 2004. He is one of only three coaches to win both a Super Bowl and an NCAA championship.

17
MAY 18, 2018, TWEET
"Over 75% of school shootings start with kids having access to unsecured and/or unsupervised guns at home. Gun owners have a responsibility to store their firearms securely. We must do more to #EndFamilyFire #SantaFeHighSchool"

JUNE 21, 2018, TWEET
"#8KidsADay are shot by guns that come from the home. 1.7 million kids live in homes with loaded and unlocked guns. It's National ASK Day on June 21. Before your child goes on a play date, ASK if there are guns and if they are securely stored. #AskingSavesKids #EndFamilyFire"

18
In 1994, Pippen was arrested after Chicago police said they saw a gun wedged between the driver's seat and center console of his illegally parked car. A judge later ruled that the police didn't have justification to search the vehicle. The misdemeanor charge was dropped.

Phil Jackson diagramming a play with Michael Jordan and Steve Kerr (*middle right*) in 1996; 20 years later, Kerr doing the same with Kevin Durant, Steph Curry, and Draymond Green (*left to right*)

into a conflict, that when you come into a conflict with anger, you're going to be met, more likely, with anger. We were dealing with that because that's part of our game: to come in with anger but turn it in a different way, that you are a warrior, but you don't have to be a warrior that's about killing people or harming people. It's about having control and exacting control. It's more like tai chi than jujitsu. We have these opportunities to coach, and you can either turn away from it or deal with it.

KERR I think the reason that you were so successful, Phil, was when you would give everybody a book[19], you gave that

19 **Jackson made a practice of giving each player a book during the season — for Kerr one year, it was *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig.**

JACKSON: SAM FORENCICH/NBAE; KERR: NOAH GRAHAM/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

a lot of thought. There was always a theme to the choice of the book that you gave to each player. That meant a lot. I don't think every coach feels confident enough to do something like that.

You got to remember that most of these guys are coming into the NBA at 20, and so they're maybe a year in college, maybe a couple years. You get all this money, and, to go back to what Rick Fox said, you're sort of trying to figure it out. You're trying to find yourself. Once you make it in the league — once you realize, "OK, I've made it, and I can make a living, and I'm going to play for a while." — then you start to think about how you can use your influence for something better. I think a good coach helps that process along for the young players.

"Most guys are significantly better one way rather than the other, but Steph can shoot standing still, off the dribble, left, right, forward, backward — it doesn't matter." – STEVE KERR

CS Steve, you've been quite public about your views, using Twitter and interviews to express your thoughts about President Trump and gun control, and Steph Curry and Kevin Durant have as well. That's radically different from 20, 30, 40 years ago, when most athletes and coaches were discouraged, if not admonished, for expressing their views on social issues. Phil is a prime example, having been ostracized when he spoke out when he was playing for the Knicks. What can you achieve by speaking out? What's changed?

KERR First of all, I think the times have changed, and the times call for it. I was born in '65, so I remember reading about Muhammad Ali and Jim Brown and Lew Alcindor and some of the great black athletes at the time joining forces in the civil rights cause — John Carlos and Tommie Smith[20]. I think after Vietnam ended we sort of entered a long period of relative peace, and it just didn't seem like there was this alarm bell going off like there is now. I think right now it just feels like people need to be speaking, because there's a lot going wrong and a lot that needs to be corrected and worked on.

I think where the NBA's gone right is the leadership works closely with the players, whereas the NFL has conjured up ways to create this false patriotism and pandered to their fan base, and they can't really figure out what to do, whether the players should stand or kneel. Whereas the NBA got out in front of all of it just by being partners with the players and being pretty upfront and outspoken themselves, going back to the Donald Sterling[21] stuff a few years ago and really beyond.

CS Phil, you're rarely on Twitter.

JACKSON What Twitter is right now is people trying to shout you down unless you're on their side. It's a very different environment. Liberal doesn't mean that you listen and discuss. Liberal means that you shout people down, and that's a different kind of a connotation than I used to see in our society.

CS You each have coached phenomenal players. Could you pick one or two and talk about what makes or made them great?

KERR Well, Steph is the obvious one, so I'll talk about him a little bit. He's one of the most unique players who's ever played. Very few guys his size have ever had this kind of impact on the game. He's pretty much exactly my size, 6 foot 3, 190 pounds. It's a different game today. You can't put your hands on him. Twenty years ago, you would have been able to put two hands on him[22] to try and slow him down a little bit and be physical with him. You can't do that now. Still, I've never seen anybody with this kind of shooting range and the ability to shoot off the dribble or catch and shoot. Most guys are significantly better one way rather than the other, but he can shoot standing still, off the dribble, left, right, forward, backward — it doesn't matter. He's got just incredible touch.

I think what makes him unique is his personality. Sometimes I'll refer to

20
After receiving gold and bronze in the 200-meter race in the 1968 Olympics, Smith and Carlos raised their fists in the air as "The Star-Spangled Banner" played.

21
In April 2014, recordings were made public that revealed Sterling, the longtime owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, making racist comments. Players, notably stars like LeBron James and Kobe Bryant, as well as coaches demanded that the NBA take action. Commissioner Adam Silver banned Sterling from the league for life and fined him $2.5 million. Subsequently, the Clippers were sold to former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer for $2 billion.

22
In 1994, the NBA eliminated "hand checking," which allowed a defender to use his hands to impede the player with the ball.

27
In 1993, the NBA began an investigation into Jordan's gambling. Stories had long circulated that Jordan bet hundreds of thousands of dollars, playing golf and cards. Soon after Jordan's first retirement — he announced that fall he wanted to pursue a baseball career — the league concluded that he had not broken any rules.

him as the short Tim Duncan[23], because he's got that same impact that Tim had on the Spurs in terms of this genuine humility in his daily life and concern and thoughts for other people and for the world and for his community, and yet, he has this great arrogance on the floor, where he knows he's the best player out there. Pretty wicked package. Very few players I've ever been around have possessed that combination.

JACKSON Steph comes from a basketball family. His father[24] was a massive influence on his basketball game, and his mother's been a big influence on his spiritual life. Does that sound right to you, Steve?

KERR No doubt. His mom[25] was a hell of an athlete, too. She was a volleyball player at Virginia Tech.

JACKSON I had a player that's like that in Kobe Bryant. He was a guy who was competitive, a shark who was seeking blood in the water. His arrogance coming into the game was almost rude. I remember watching him in his first All-Star Game[26], and I thought he was disrespectful in how he approached the game. But he was always challenging, always trying to go after the biggest fish in the water.

You know there's that joyful hero excellence that goes along with being a star, and then there's also that humbling experience that happens to many of our players when they are taken off their pedestal. We've seen it happen to a lot of players. Michael Jordan when his gambling[27] became the issue that everybody focused on in a certain period of his career. For Kobe, it was an act[28] that changed his life. Soon after, the Lakers had a back-to-back[29] with Portland. We had played them at home and then flew to Portland. It's not a nice trip. It's raining. We must have gotten in at 3 o'clock in the morning. I always had a meeting with the coaches in the morning. And we're meeting at 9 o'clock in the basement of the hotel, and we're sitting there, and Kobe comes in the door. It's Ash Wednesday, and he's got ashes. He's gotten up and gone to church.

From then on in his career, it was all growth to a point where we saw a guy that did some things that were miraculous. It was dedication. I often went to work at 8:30, and if we had a late night, that's pretty early. I'd pull into my parking spot, and Kobe'd be there taking a nap in his car. He'd been there since 6:30 working out. He had a remarkable drive towards getting better. I've never seen another player attack his personal habits the way he did.

CS Steve, if you had a question for Phil, what would it be? And Phil, what would you like to ask Steve?

KERR Phil, where'd you travel last year? How long were you in Montana[30]?

JACKSON Well, I was a resident of Montana for much of the year, but I had a film festival that I was invited to in Rome in October, and I went over there. I called my trip Razor's Edge[31]. It was a spiritual journey. I wanted to make the most of it, so I took in a lot of Roman Catholic history. I visited the Vatican and lots of churches. Later, I went to Buddhist Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. I ended up being gone for a little more than five weeks on that trip. I came back to Montana in mid-March and have been here since. It was an interesting year, a very interesting year. I did things like bake bread. I don't watch much basketball, but I did watch your team, and I did watch the end of the playoffs, the last two segments of the East and West finals.

KERR Yeah, you called with some advice on Chris Paul that was helpful.

JACKSON I have two questions for Steve. How was your summer? How are things physically[32]?

KERR Yeah, yeah. I am doing better, which is great. I'm not 100 percent still. It's been a long haul, but I am doing better, and I've found some things that have been helpful, so that's encouraging. As you well remember, the summers aren't long enough after you go to the Finals.

23
Considered by many the greatest power forward of all time, Duncan was famous for not wanting to be famous.

24
A shooting guard, Dell Curry played in the NBA for 16 seasons, mostly for the Charlotte Hornets. He retired in 2002.

25
A setter, Sonya Curry played on the Virginia Tech varsity volleyball team for three years. She now runs a Montessori school in North Carolina.

26
The 1998 All-Star Game was hyped as Bryant versus Jordan. At 19, Bryant was the youngest All-Star in NBA history. Jordan was considered the greatest player in NBA history. He won the game's MVP award, but Bryant had more spectacular plays and made a point to score on — and, some thought, show up — Jordan.

28
In 2003, a 19-year-old woman accused Bryant of raping her. Authorities charged Bryant with sexual assault, which he denied. After the woman said she would not testify in court, the charges were dropped. She later brought a civil suit against Bryant, who settled for an undisclosed sum.

29
When teams play two days in a row. Players and coaches dislike these games because they're grueling, especially if they require flying to a different city. In recent years, the NBA has reduced the number of back-to-backs.

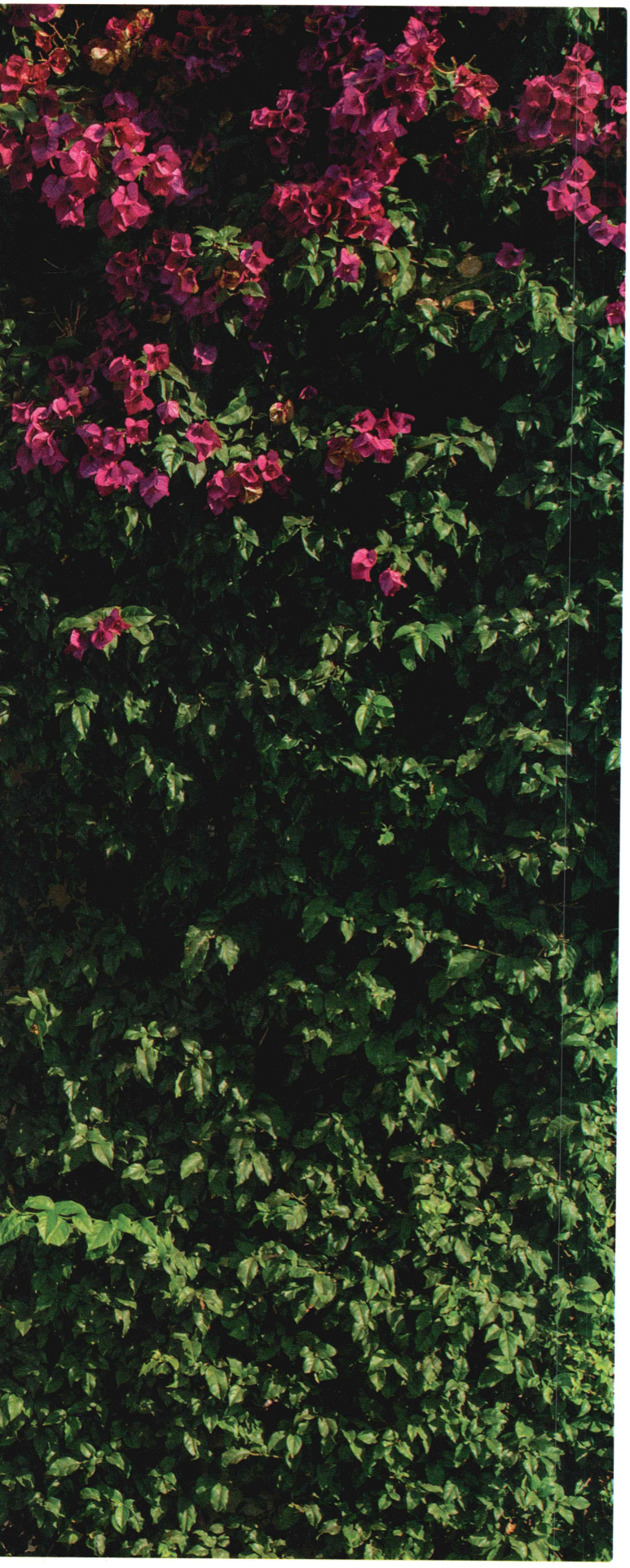
30
Jackson spent much of his childhood in Montana and has been going back during the off-season since his playing days in the NBA.

31
Published in 1944, W. Somerset Maugham's novel tells the story of an American whose horrific experiences in World War I lead him to reject conventional life and pursue spiritual truth in Europe and, later, India.

32
Kerr suffered from a cerebrospinal fluid leak after he had back surgery in July 2015, which has led to severe nausea and headaches. Because of the condition, Kerr missed 43 games in the 2015–16 season. He also missed the first three rounds of the 2017 playoffs but was able to coach the Finals.

KIT RACHLIS
is a senior editor at *The California Sunday Magazine*.

JAMES CHIA HAN LEE
is a Taiwan-born, Toronto-based artist and graphic designer.



SAFE HOUSE

A group of Latina women across the country have been working in secret, turning their homes into shelters for abused immigrant women.

By Lizzie Presser

Photographs by Cinthya Santos Briones

Valentina* drove two hours up the California coast to the flat farming town of Santa Maria and stopped outside a white motor home. "Silvia," she sang, tilting her head out the car window on a recent afternoon. With broad shoulders and dyed-blond hair framing her soft face, Valentina is striking even without her signature crystal-encrusted shoes. Silvia looked up from the cactus she was planting and walked to the car. She dangled her crimson fingernails for Valentina to admire. Valentina, who is 60, had been encouraging her to indulge in little luxuries, like walks on the beach or manicures, and she smiled at the sight of Silvia's hands. Like Valentina, Silvia is from Mexico, and she was trying to leave her partner.

Since the mid-'90s, Valentina had assisted hundreds of Latina women who were beaten at home, harassed at work, assaulted. She had a particular affinity for Silvia, whom she'd met a few years earlier. Silvia was reserved, a truck driver, a mother of five who often looked defeated, with deep lines around big brown eyes, her shoulders folded in. She had come to the United States in 1985 as a teenager to join her father, and she'd been with her partner for nearly 30 years.

The two women drove to a bakery at a nearby mall, where they sat under fluorescent lights discussing Silvia's options once again. Valentina was the first person Silvia had told about her problems at home. She didn't want to call the police or go to a shelter. She wasn't ready for the courts. Her partner had one domestic-violence report already, and if she accused him now, he'd likely be picked up by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "If he were deported because of me, because of my situation, I think I'd lose my kids completely," she started to ramble. She still had two children in the house, and she worried their father would take them to Mexico. "But if you had an emergency," Valentina asked, "you'd call me, right?"

Valentina isn't a social worker or a therapist or a lawyer. She is an immigrant who opens her home to women whose husbands or boyfriends abuse them. The women who come are waitresses, saleswomen, fruit and vegetable pickers, housecleaners. Like Silvia, many are ashamed, reluctant to point a finger or to file for divorce. Most are undocumented, and before President Trump's election, they went to Valentina when they didn't know their rights or when shelters didn't have space. Since Trump, even those with papers avoid shelters and mistrust the law. Silvia had stayed at Valentina's house for a week, and now Valentina has taken to checking on her. She's hoping Silvia will leave her partner, but she can't predict if she will or how long it might take.

Valentina opened her house to women, in part, because no one had for her. She'd arrived in California from Mexico in 1980 to be with her husband and almost immediately became pregnant. The violence started with slaps in the face. Once, he threw a can of tomatoes, which hit her in the eye; she covered the bruises with black oversize sunglasses. On one of the worst evenings, her husband came home drunk, and Valentina encouraged him to eat dinner, hoping it would cut the alcohol. Instead, he smashed potted plants on the kitchen floor, poured beer over the shards and soil, and shoved Valentina to the ground, yanking her long hair back and forth over the mess, like a mop.

Without family in the States, Valentina's world was limited to cobbled-together jobs and weekends with her young kids. She wasn't aware of any shelters, and when she called the police, they told her husband to take a walk. The priest at a nearby church said if she kept praying, it would get better. It didn't, and after a few years, she began preparing to leave. She took night classes toward a nursing degree and applied for legal status under President Reagan's amnesty program, secretly putting away savings.

When she found letters her husband kept from a lover, that was it. She took her four kids from their stucco home in a residential neighborhood to a dark two-bedroom apartment wedged between a butcher and a travel-insurance agency. She was haunted by nightmares of her ex pointing a gun and cried nearly every day, talking out loud to herself, asking how she'd get by. She worked days at a rural health clinic, nights as a janitor, and Saturdays and Sundays selling jewelry or food samples at supermarkets.

Valentina knew to listen, TO GIVE GUIDANCE BUT NOT JUDGMENT if the women didn't want to leave their relationships — it had taken her years to divorce her husband.

With the exception of Mily Treviño-Sauceda, all names have been changed.

PREVIOUS PAGES
For more than 20 years, Valentina has opened her home to women whose husbands or boyfriends abuse them.
ABOVE
Outside and inside Valentina's home

She hadn't grown up with violence in her home, so when her husband had hit her, it seemed foreign. Now, it was beginning to feel as if she were seeing it everywhere. At the clinic, she noticed bruises on her patients' necks and overheard hints in colleagues' conversations. She drew them out when they talked about men in their lives, picking up cues in the cadence of their voices. Soon a small number of women were asking for her help. A medical assistant called in need of a ride to the hospital after her husband branded her arm with an iron. A woman she'd sold jewelry to moved in with her two sons for a month.

Valentina knew to listen, to give guidance but not judgment if the women didn't want to leave their relationships — it had taken her years to divorce her husband. What she could do was give the women a place to stay, the kind of reprieve that rich people could buy. She lent money, gave food, tended to the women when they arrived after beatings. Once, her kids came home to find her stitching someone up. Her son complained that she'd mistaken their home for a hospital. To Valentina, it was more like a shelter.

IN 2008, ABOUT TEN YEARS after she'd started inviting women into her home, Valentina received a call from a friend at the clinic, asking if she'd meet with Mily Treviño-Sauceda. When they got together, Valentina learned that Mily was a founder of Líderes Campesinas, a group that organized female farmworkers. Mily, who was Mexican American, had begun working in Idaho's potato fields with her parents at the age of 8, tagging along with her father to union meetings when she was a teenager. By the time she started Líderes, she was 30 and widowed, raising a young boy on her own.

Mily explained that Líderes had initially trained farmworkers on issues like pesticides and housing, but she kept hearing about domestic violence. She saw how its effects extended beyond the household: It stopped women from standing up for themselves in the fields. "In their stories, when they talked about how they were abused in the workplace, they then said, 'How can I share that if my husband won't believe me?'" If women couldn't speak up in their own homes, they weren't likely to speak up anywhere. This insight became a central tenet of Líderes. If they were going to fight discrimination at work — wage theft, health risks, sexual harassment — they needed to think about violence against women in both their public and private lives.

Valentina began attending Líderes meetings, where women from farmworker families shared meals and talked about the social services they could turn to. Some put on skits. Inspired by the tradition of Mexican street theater, where actors perform religious fables, these plays revolved around violence in the home. At times, the women sat in a circle, sharing details of how their partners mistreated them as others listened, consoled them, and assured them they had power. They discussed the statistics, too — how

ABOVE
Mily Treviño-Sauceda, co-founder of Líderes Campesinas, a group that organizes female farmworkers
OPPOSITE
Valentina readying her spare room

Latina women experience domestic violence at the same rate as white women, but for immigrants, the rate is nearly double — and the risks of leaving, when the chances of homicide are greatest.

Mily watched as women opened up to Valentina and noticed that they kept calling afterward. The two were opposites. Mily gave orders and hurried between appointments, beaded bracelets clinking on her wrist. She guarded her emotions behind quick eyes and tight lips. Valentina was an observer. In her typical black jackets, she stood back, nodding when spoken to. The pair had discovered they were born the same year and married the same year, and it seemed as though they were cosmically connected. Valentina slowed Mily down, and Mily ushered Valentina into a world where she wasn't a one-woman show managing a crisis.

On weekends, Mily visited women from Líderes chapters across California, and Valentina often joined her on those trips, giving out her number at meetings and also laundromats, beauty salons, supermarkets. She talked on local radio stations, and Líderes sent survivors her way. Her cellphone jingled with calls. Before meeting Mily, Valentina took in mainly women she knew. Now, she was speaking with strangers. Since she was a nurse, many first got in touch with questions about their health. When they continued to call, Valentina told them about her marriage.

No matter how many times she did, her eyes went pink. She described how her head had ached and her stomach tightened when her husband arrived home from work; how when she left him and couldn't afford Halloween costumes for her kids, she turned the four into Smurfs with blue masks and pajamas; how she'd lost her furniture in the divorce, but it didn't matter, because what she wanted was to be free. Over time, some asked if it was OK if the men in their lives withheld money or demanded sex. It often took months before they acknowledged their partners beat or raped them.

On her trips with Mily, Valentina also discovered that other women connected to Líderes invited victims into their houses. Each woman offered what she could — a guest bedroom, if she had one, couches, or blankets on the floor. They didn't speak publicly about it; if abusers in their towns knew, they might be at risk.

Valentina was relieved to find out she wasn't the only one. It occurred to her that they could work together, giving shelter to women across the state. By 2018, Valentina would be able to count more than 30 Latina women throughout California who opened their homes for survivors. As Mily began organizing the first national alliance of female farmworkers, Valentina would learn of another 150 around the country.

Mily had made a career building an above-ground organization that linked victims with public services. Valentina, she recognized, was an underground counterpart. "I'd seen people doing it, but I hadn't paid attention until I met Valentina," Mily said. "I started understanding it: These

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are women that were willing to take high risks. They'd learned that they could not depend on federal or state agencies, or emergency services, or even crisis centers." Instead, they were building their own parallel system, off the books.

THE SAME YEAR Valentina met Mily, the government began offering new protection to immigrants who had been abused. As part of a reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, the U visa was created, and it provided immigrant victims of violent crimes with a path to permanent residency. When the Violence Against Women Act had first passed, in 1994, that relief was only available to immigrant survivors abused by violent spouses who were U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Most of the women Líderes worked with weren't married to legal residents; many weren't married at all. Mily had advocated to expand the law to protect unmarried survivors, and the U visa passed with bipartisan support under a condition: Victims could apply if they helped with the investigation or prosecution of the crime. It was a major win. Starting in 2008, undocumented women had far more to gain if they reported their partners. But the first step, Valentina saw, fell to women like her. She had to encourage Latinas to trust authorities while also keeping them safe.

Women who went to the police often CALLED SHEEPISHLY FROM THE DEPARTMENT, ASKING HER TO TRANSLATE because no one spoke Spanish.

In Mexico, Valentina had worked several years for law enforcement, and now she gave women tips for collecting evidence — save messages, take photos of bruises, keep a journal with dates and witnesses. She gathered business cards from social agencies and vetted the local shelters. When she told women their rights, many agreed to talk to the police. Although deportations rose under President Obama, these women didn't feel they were targets — the administration was focusing on recent border crossers. Sometimes Valentina's efforts paid off. She accompanied women to prosecutors, testified in custody cases, and personally served three men with divorce papers.

More often, though, Valentina was disappointed. The Violence Against Women Act included funds to train law enforcement and crisis centers on immigrant survivors, but the women she saw weren't getting the support they needed. Women who went to the police often called sheepishly from the department, asking her to translate because no one spoke Spanish. For those who needed a safe place to sleep, she was initially excited to know that she could dial shelter staff. But not once was she able to get them in; there were just 28 beds in her county. She was outraged to discover that most agencies offered only around 15 sessions of free therapy. She knew it took far longer for women to recover.

Women continued to filter in and out of her shaded apartment nearly every day. When they stayed the night, they slept in the spare room decorated with inspirational phrases in cursive ("You're never too little to dream big!" "Kindness is always FREE"). Some had bruises or were bleeding or had teeth marks, and she dressed them with arnica salve and drew baths. Valentina asked if they were feeling suicidal and whether there were weapons in the house. She began seeing more indigenous women from Latin America, who barely spoke Spanish. She sketched the outline of a human body on paper. "Did he hurt you here or here?" she'd ask, pointing to different limbs. She slept with her flip phone by her pillow in case the men arrived and she needed to call the cops.

One teenager moved into her house with two kids, her infant padding around on the thick blue carpet. She stayed in bed most of the day, waiting a month for her mom to travel 1,600 miles from Kansas City to pick her up. Most came for shorter stints. Some carried bags stuffed with clothes, others nothing at all, as if they'd fled without a minute to think. One had been chased off her ranch with a gun.

Only about half the women who stayed with Valentina left their relationships. Several moved back to Mexico, unable to support their kids while they waited for a visa. (Though U visa applicants can receive public benefits in California, lawyers say their clients in 11 counties are regularly turned down.) Then there were those who felt it was safer to change towns and start new lives. They figured if they didn't get protection — a restraining order, a U visa — it was better to disappear. Valentina gave them the phone numbers of others who opened their homes across the state.

Valentina prided herself on her bravery, picking up women in the middle of the night or confronting their

boyfriends after beatings. It was as if she were summoning another side of herself. Most women asked Valentina if she wanted to remarry, and she was always firm in her response. She was happy alone, and she didn't want to give her children another father; she was done. A few years into her work with Mily, she'd left her day job at the clinic. Her kids now supported her — after nights spent crawling into her bed, scattered with nursing textbooks, three of them had taken up jobs in health care. Her son was a psychotherapist; her oldest daughter, a pharmacy technician; her youngest, a nurse. She was delighted they had established themselves in her field. None had married, though, and she wondered if she was to blame.

THE ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP sent more women underground. After the administration broadened enforcement, Líderes saw that the number of farmworkers writing their full names or addresses on sign-up sheets was shrinking. Fewer were coming to meetings. Valentina recognized that most of the women she saw didn't want to report to authorities at all. Many said their partners threatened to call ICE if they did — a classic abuse tactic that had new force. Others fixated on the possibility that the men would be deported and they'd be left without child support. Now, more women were calling her, most out of fear, determined to avoid any interaction with officials.

Valentina wasn't the only one noticing this shift; the other women opening their homes to survivors were hearing it, too. So was law enforcement. Within months of Trump's inauguration, Los Angeles police had found that sexual assault reports among Latinos had fallen by a quarter. Half a year in, domestic violence reports had dropped 13 percent in San Diego and 18 percent in San Francisco. More than a dozen major rape crisis centers across California estimated that their Latina clientele had shrunk anywhere from 10 percent to 80 percent. For many women applying for a U visa, the police or a crisis center would be the first stop; if they didn't help law enforcement, they wouldn't qualify.

Even women who sought U visas were at risk. In 2014, the government was granting the visas to people who had filed five months earlier. By 2018, there was a significant backlog. Women whom Valentina helped file would likely wait nine years for a decision, and they could be removed from the country in the meantime. More than 117,000 victims had pending applications, and the visas are capped at 10,000 a year. The number of adjudicators has also dropped from 93 in 2014 to 60 at last count. This summer, Valentina watched on TV as the administration announced a new policy that anyone without legal status whose U visa is denied will be placed in removal proceedings. *One mistake, and they're deported,* she thought to herself. *They see the*

BELOW
Many of the women who arrive at Valentina's bring their children.
OPPOSITE
After a year of training, Elena started taking women into her home.

government rejecting them. They hear Trump talking about "illegal people." They are now living in anonymous ways.

In a sense, Valentina felt prepared. The number of women who opened their homes had grown. At conferences for female farmworkers in California, she had met dozens of them. She'd also started drawing in new allies — alternative-medicine practitioners, Mixtec interpreters, and a lawyer and child therapist who took Valentina's cases for free. Mily had helped establish an umbrella organization for female farmworker groups across the country, and Valentina had gotten to know many of the women involved. When survivors were moving out of California, she knew whom to call in Florida, Illinois, Texas, Washington.

Gradually, she'd become a point person, and when Líderes members or other activists needed to find a home for a victim, they phoned her first. The women who took in survivors were mainly single, living in remote towns. Most had experienced domestic violence themselves, or had a relative who had, and knew how hard it was to leave without a trusted place to go. Valentina helped women new to this work navigate complicated cases, like victims who'd left behind medication they needed or those furnishing a new home without savings. Among one another, they discussed how to protect themselves from abusers but also how women might take advantage of their generosity. Valentina had lent money that was never returned and had given shelter to women who lied about their situations. Still, she said, that had never been a reason to stop.

Coordinating the network came easily to Valentina, whose calm, doting manner often landed her the role of a godmother, but she also wanted to expand it. She liked to distract herself by playing penny slots at the Chumash Casino, where she discovered that the neighboring city of Santa Maria was two-thirds Latino. She decided to train a woman there, and through a friend, she was introduced to a former farmworker. Elena was quiet and curious, with an oval face and skinny, arched brows. Though she was interested, she was sure she wasn't qualified. She'd only ever worked in the fields and didn't speak English or use a computer.

Valentina began waking up at dawn to drive to Santa Maria, more than 100 miles away, two or three times each week. She set up appointments at health clinics, food pantries, and churches, and Elena watched as Valentina took down numbers and asked questions. Elena had felt confined by the street Spanish she spoke and started learning words she hadn't known. Valentina took her window-shopping at the mall or belted Mexican folk songs, dancing in her seat, when Elena seemed down. After several months, Elena took the lead. She held meetings with women in homes across the city, Valentina sitting by her side.

The election of Donald Trump sent more women underground. Valentina recognized that most of THE WOMEN SHE SAW DIDN'T WANT TO REPORT TO AUTHORITIES AT ALL.

Within a year, Elena was taking women in. She was nervous about the strangers, reminding her 10-year-old daughter to stay in her bedroom and lock the door, but after the first few came and went with their kids, she loosened up. In the morning, she woke up early to make breakfast and scouted for apartment listings. At her peak, 20 people stayed in the house at once, kids' arms dangling off the leather sofas. Her daughter slept in the bathtub.

Around the same time that she opened her home, Elena told Valentina why she had been interested. She sat across from her on a bright afternoon at an outdoor table of a coffee shop. "I think I was in a worse situation than you," she started. Elena began to tell Valentina about the father of her child. She explained how he had raped her at work when she was a teenager and how her parents had pressured her to be with him afterward. She talked about how he would treat her like a piece of paper that he could do whatever he liked to. She said that, after they had a child together, he tried to kill her, running the blade of a knife across her neck.

When she decided to go to the police a week later, they didn't help. She felt paralyzed, as if her mind had dissolved. She hadn't known her rights or that she qualified for a U visa. Instead, she kept quiet and hid out at her sister's house for a year, working 13-hour days picking strawberries and peppers. "How stupid I was," she said over and over. Valentina wrapped her arms around Elena. "*Chaparrita*," she said, "we didn't have any experience." §

LIZZIE PRESSER is a contributing writer to *The California Sunday Magazine* and is based in New York.

CINTHYA SANTOS BRIONES is from Hidalgo, Mexico. She is a recent graduate of the Visual Journalism and Documentary Practice at the International Center of Photography.

MEOW WOLF'S MA

BONGO

How a ragtag group of artists launched an art-entertainment empire

BY TAYLOR CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIAN MICHAEL FILARDO

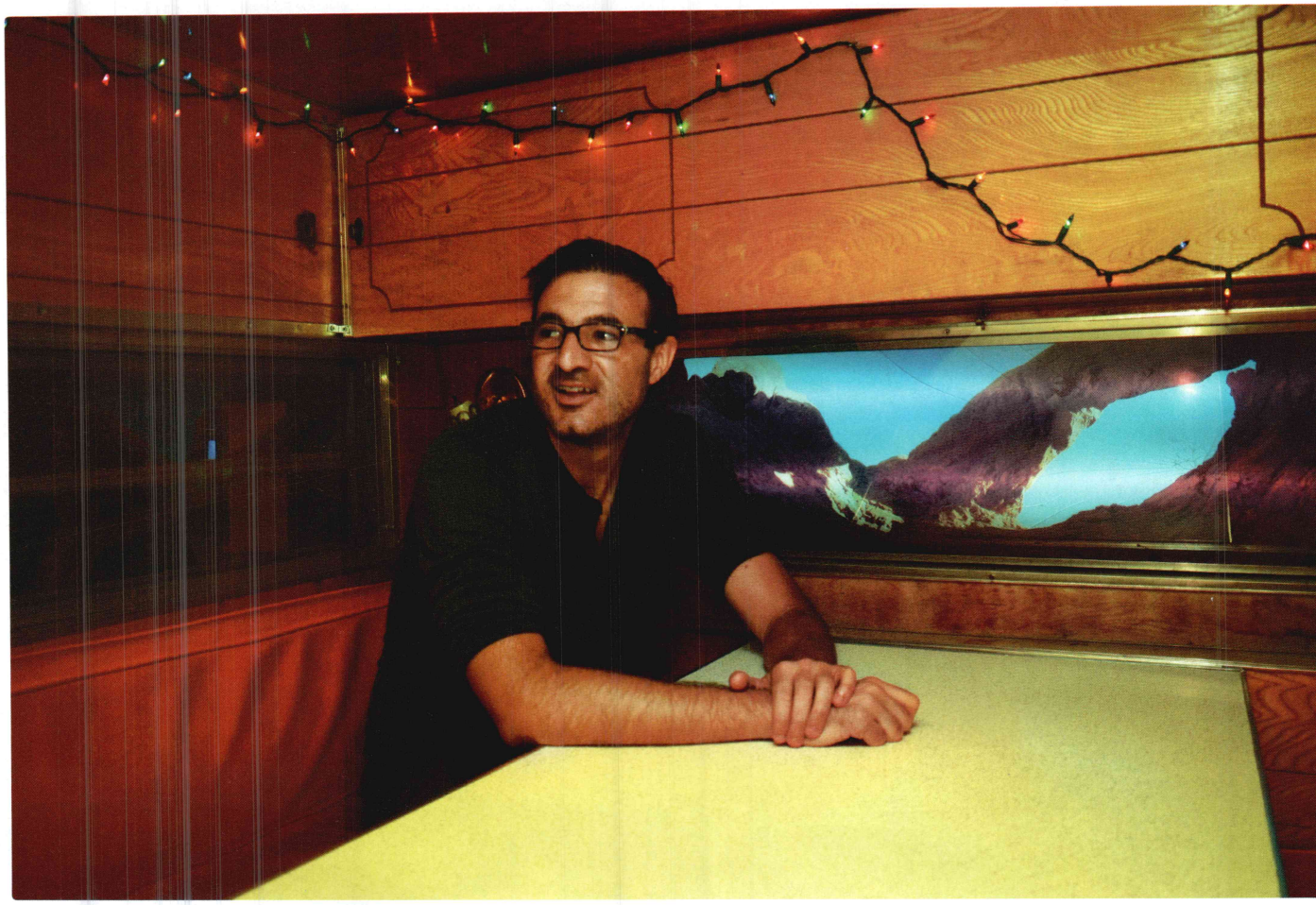
AGIC KINGDOM

One afternoon this spring, I was exploring the dim, salmon-pink kitchen inside the Meow Wolf collective's first permanent exhibit, *House of Eternal Return* — a sprawling, fever-dream portrayal of a family home that had a nasty brush with the multiverse — when someone bulldozed me aside from behind.

I wheeled around, expecting to find, say, a vacationing linebacker. Instead, my assailant was a grandmotherly woman in a teal blouse, who now stared raptly at the refrigerator. "Look! Look!" she called back to her family, pointing insistently. On cue, the fridge's door slowly swung open, spreading a fan of milky light across the linoleum floor. From where one expected to see racks and crispers, two wide-eyed teenagers emerged. Behind them, down the refrigerated rabbit hole, a glowing white corridor plunged into the unknown.

Somewhat by design, it's difficult to explain exactly what *House of Eternal Return* is, because words like "museum" and "gallery" certainly don't cover it. Equal parts art pageant, labyrinth of curiosities, and interactive storytelling experience, the *House* is best understood as a wonderland of creative consciousness expansion. What Meow Wolf sells isn't just art but awe, hypershareable and appropriate for all ages — less MoMA, more Magic Mushroom Kingdom. As Emily Montoya, one of the collective's co-founders, told me, "We bring out the adult in the child and the child in the adult." The aim, in other words, is to make even a grandmother want to bowl through you to gaze in stupefaction at a fridge.

Inside *House of Eternal Return*, hidden bookcase doors lead to rainbow-lit simulations of non-Euclidean space-time. Flora musically luminesce at your touch. Next door to the interdimensional travel agency, on the way to the mastodon cavern, a long, tubular owl slowly blinks down at passers-by from its glacier-blue roost. "The first time I walked through, I thought, *My god, this is what it looks like when you dream — come to life!*" said Winston Fisher, a Meow Wolf investor who now sits on the company's board of directors.



Meow Wolf CEO Vince Kadlubek

Somewhat by design, it's difficult to explain exactly what House of Eternal Return is, because words like "museum" and "gallery" certainly don't cover it.

The ticket-buying public, it's fair to say, has responded with similar enthusiasm to the collective's experiment in family-friendly psychedelia. When Meow Wolf first set out to turn an abandoned Santa Fe bowling alley into the *House*, in 2015, it told investors it would need 100,000 visitors per year to break even, a far-fetched goal for a ragtag band of dumpster-foraging artists. Last year, Meow Wolf drew 500,000 people. Its gross revenue of $9 million could've recouped the exhibit's construction cost nearly four times over. And every week, the line outside stretches farther and farther toward the sunbaked, 30-foot-tall robot at the opposite end of the parking lot.

The only people not blindsided by the *House*'s success, it seems, are the Meow Wolfers themselves, led by their combatively self-assured CEO, Vince Kadlubek. "We knew this was going to go viral," Kadlubek told me. "We were putting art into a context it had never been put into before. I remember as we were opening the exhibit, when we had no money in the bank and people were wondering if it was going to work, just yelling at the top of my lungs, 'You guys, we are creating something that is going to be international! Just trust it!'"

What once sounded like grandiosity looks downright prescient today. Only a few years removed from its days of scavenging, Meow Wolf is now a burgeoning art-entertainment empire, with more than 350 employees and some $30 million in funding to build its next two permanent exhibits, in Las Vegas and Denver. The success of these new outposts, set to cost nine figures to build and operate, will determine whether the collective can pull off plans far more ambitious than conventional expansion. "The trajectory we're on, I see us one day creating something like a Disneyland, where people come for the weekend and there's more than they could ever see," said Matt King, Meow Wolf's sleeve-tattooed and bountifully maned creative vice president.

In a time when crowds at traditional museums keep thinning and what was once called high culture increasingly seems like a niche pursuit for the aging, Meow Wolf's maximalist approach may just represent the future of how we interact with art. This future isn't quietly intellectual, hands-off, or overseen by frowning, blue-haired docents. It's immersive, broadly appealing, Instagrammable — and primed for expansion.

VIEWED FROM A CERTAIN ANGLE, the story of Meow Wolf is really the story of Vince Kadlubek's getting himself fired in three increasingly productive ways.

Now 36, with a wide, perpetually stubbled jawline and an air of aloof intensity, Kadlubek has long had a reputation around his native Santa Fe as a firebrand — charming and passionate but also given to eruptions. For a CEO in the visionary mold, this approach has its uses. "What makes Vince great at what he does is that he's willing to say s--- that really upsets you," Sean Di Ianni, Meow Wolf's chief operating officer, told me. But Kadlubek has also had a habit of spitting venom at those who stand in his way, be it through newspaper letters sections (where he has denounced opponents as "silly clowns") or social media; the *Santa Fe New Mexican* notes, for example, that Kadlubek "is known to write incendiary comments on Facebook and then delete them." As one longtime friend told me, "Vince is a brilliant guy. That means he can be brilliantly generous and a brilliant a--hole."

Hence the first firing. In 2006, while working as a program coordinator for a local youth arts nonprofit, Kadlubek staged an explosive confrontation with his boss over the center's direction. He was fired on the spot. Afterward, as he sat weeping in his car, Kadlubek noticed a "For Lease" sign on a vacant hair salon. He thought of all his young artist friends stuck in the purgatorial parade of menial jobs they called the "Santa Fe shuffle," unable to get their work shown in the city's notoriously conservative galleries. An idea struck. "I realized that for 900 bucks a month, we could have our own space if we all pitched in," Kadlubek told me. Nine friends rallied to the cause. To find a name, they drew random words out of two hats — and thus, Meow Wolf was born.

From the start, the new collective walked a narrow path between collaboration and anarchy. "That first space was tiny," King said. "We didn't want it to be yours this month, then mine next month, because then it would be a year until you got to show anything again." So, by necessity, Meow Wolf's members — painters, graphic designers, performers, and more — began banding together on hulking junk-sculpture installations: horror houses filled with piles of castoff televisions, geodesic domes modeled out of umbrellas and lawn furniture. At first, these works were formless and chaotic; artists would stake out a piece of turf and create whatever they wanted. "But a few shows into that, we started to get dissatisfied with the lack of composition and flow," Caity Kennedy, Meow Wolf's vice president of art direction, told me. Soon, they settled into a formula that continues to this day: Each new exhibition featured alcoves that individual artists could sculpt as they pleased, so long as their work fit with the piece's central vision.

Reaching that central vision was a fractious process, however, marked not just by artistic

disagreements but by a widespread antipathy to the very idea of planning. The collective's weekly Wednesday-night meetings often bloated into four-hour sagas of arguments and mayhem. "I was the first person to bring an agenda to a meeting, and it literally got crumpled up and thrown on the floor," recalled Corvas Brinkerhoff, now Meow Wolf's chief technology officer.

The last thing that most of the collective's artists wanted was a boss, but Kadlubek kept fighting to be just that. "Vince is someone who really wants to lead," King said, "and back then, we all wanted to be on an even playing field." Plus, added Kennedy, "there was nothing *to* lead. We were stapling garbage to the walls." Kadlubek wrote stories and plays for Meow Wolf, yet his greatest gifts lay in his propensity for organization and strategy. The more that impulse got thwarted by a group that prided itself on its rebellious ethos, the more strained things grew. "I was just a 20-something kid who was figuring out what he was capable of," Kadlubek told me. "I wanted to have more of a grip on the collective, while they wanted a free-for-all. So there was tension there."

Things finally boiled over in 2008, when Kadlubek had to step away from Meow Wolf. While not explicitly a firing — volunteer-run arts collectives whose primary assets are burritos and reclaimed lumber don't really fire people — it amounted to as much. The 16 months Kadlubek spent away from the collective were difficult ones for him. He grew suicidal. He fell into shoplifting bread and electronics. What turned things around was attending the Landmark Forum, a personal-development course praised by admirers as a tough-love path to radical accountability and criticized by detractors as a cultish a--hole-encouragement program. Either way, it spoke to Kadlubek. "It was literally a weekend that completely changed my life," he told me. "It brought me back into a positive relationship with my own capabilities."

Newly refocused, Kadlubek returned to Meow Wolf in late 2009 with a play he had written, called *The Moon Is to Live On*. "I didn't ask anyone if I could come back in," he recalled. "I just wrote the script as if it was a Meow Wolf play, and everybody decided it was." That production set a new standard of ambition for the collective, with rotating stages, video displays, and elaborate neon-glow dream sequences for which audiences received 3-D glasses. More important, *The Moon Is to Live On* was the first time the collective worked as an actual organization, with duties and planning, under Kadlubek's looser-reined leadership.

Meow Wolf's breakthrough came the following year with *The Due Return*, known around the collective as "the boat" — a nickname that significantly underplays the preposterous monumentality of the project. Commissioned for a run at Santa Fe's Center for Contemporary Arts, *The Due Return* was a colossal, 73-foot-long wooden galleon, built from scratch and styled as though it had dimension hopped from 18th-century Earth to beach upon a spookily lambent alien world. One hundred volunteers worked on the ship for a year, vying to fit as much imagination as possible into its 2,500 square feet: scientific specimens, interactive gadgets, a 70,000-word ship's log, live performers playacting as the boat's crew, and more.

Just as remarkable as *The Due Return*'s scope, though, was its immersive appeal. Here was an art installation, sanctified by a respected gallery, that was somehow *fun*. Kids, especially, found the exhibit enthralling; it was like an explorable, retro-sci-fi Pirates

of the Caribbean ride. What truly jolted the collective was the revenue this enthusiasm produced. "We'd put donation boxes out at shows before, and at the end of the month, it would have 25 bucks in it," Kennedy said. "But with the boat, 98 percent of the people donated $10 or more — and they were thrilled to give it." By the end of its two-month run, *The Due Return* had taken in $120,000, which Kadlubek, not knowing what else to do with so much cash, kept in a shoebox.

Triumphant as it was, the show left Meow Wolf exhausted and strangely adrift. "The months after *Due Return* were hard for everyone," Di Ianni said. "We saw an opportunity for something, but trying to figure out how to do it led to so many insanely intense, grating conversations that it made us stop meeting." Save for a few traveling installations, the collective descended into hibernation. Its gallery space remained shuttered. Kadlubek got caught shoplifting DVDs from a Walmart.

It took a tragedy to save the collective from collapse. In 2014, the longtime Meow Wolf collaborator David Loughridge, who had been undergoing electroconvulsive therapy to treat his bipolar disorder, fell into a coma hours

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
Looking down at The Magic Forest; the bedroom of a pop-culture-enthralled teenager; Matt King, Meow Wolf's vice president of creative, and Caity Kennedy, vice president of art direction; the gift shop; a porch that leads into *House of Eternal Return*

after his last treatment. "When David went into the hospital, it was like we had a Meow Wolf reunion inside the waiting room," King told me. Loughridge died the next day of cardiac arrest. The collective's six principal founders spent a week in mourning at King and Kennedy's house. "But being back together felt really good," King said. "So we really started to push the idea that the only way to get to the next step is if we become the institution — if we find a building where we can make a large enough exhibit to charge admission."

Which brings us to the third firing. Kadlubek had recently become the marketing director of a newly restored Santa Fe art-house cinema, the Jean Cocteau. The job bored him. "They were having me update their WordPress site, and I really didn't want to do it," Kadlubek told me. After a few months, his boss axed him. Yet this particular boss, it so happened, knew a bit more about axing than your average theater owner. His name was George R.R. Martin.

ONE OF MEOW WOLF'S more remarkable feats has been its knack for drawing major investments with an idea that, on the surface, doesn't seem tremendously bankable. In *House of Eternal Return*'s planning phase, for example, a mutual friend asked the Santa Fe philanthropists Beth and Rick Schneiders to let Kadlubek practice his pitch on them at a local brewery. "So we sat and listened," Beth recalled, "and when Vince was done, my husband said, 'Wow, I don't know that this is ever going to work.'" Beth had a different reaction. "I was totally in," she said. "I thought it was the greatest thing I'd ever heard of — a new way of experiencing art that could appeal to all ages and at the same time provide artists with a decent, reliable living. I said, 'Yes, and I'll give you $100,000.' Even Vince was taken aback." When Kadlubek called a few months later asking for more, she chipped in again — and so many times thereafter that she's lost count. "I haven't said no yet," Beth told me.

The most important sell Kadlubek had to make, of course, was also the thorniest: his bestselling former boss. A Santa Fean since 1979, Martin had been spreading his authorial largesse around the local arts scene for years, leading *The Guardian* to label him the city's "unofficial minister of culture." What remained to be seen was whether his patronage extended to those he'd fired. In July 2014, Kadlubek organized a successful panel discussion at the Jean Cocteau, after which Martin expressed interest in working with him again. Weeks later, Kadlubek took that sliver-width opening and plowed a cement mixer through it. Buy us a derelict bowling alley to house our next exhibit, he proposed, and Meow Wolf will rent it back from you.

Only a few years removed from its days of scavenging, Meow Wolf is a burgeoning art-entertainment empire, with more than 350 employees and some $30 million in funding.

Martin, impressed with Kadlubek's pluck, was surprisingly receptive to the idea. "We drove over to the bowling alley and walked through," Kadlubek recalled, "and he really loved the bowling-pin sign. He said, 'If I buy the bowling alley, can we keep the bowling-pin sign?' I was like, 'Uh, yeah.'" In all, Martin committed $3 million to acquiring and renovating the building, which he then leased to Meow Wolf at a below-market rate. (Martin later bought equity in the company as well.) "Luckily, he didn't have a really strong business manager at the time," Kadlubek said, laughing. "Anybody else would've looked at us and said it was too risky."

Coup that it was, courting Martin was only the first step in an arduous trek to make *House of Eternal Return* a reality. What Meow Wolf wanted to build was unprecedentedly massive: an actual house, flanked on all sides by the blown-out detritus of the multiverse. It wasn't just the sprawling inventory of physical features that posed a challenge — the networked treetop village, the polychromatic walk-through aquarium, and so on. It was also the logistical dilemma of tying each of these pieces into an overarching narrative mystery, with clues strewn around the exhibit, about a family whose science experiments somehow tore open a rift in space-time.

The undertaking proved so immense, in fact, that it nearly buckled under its own figurative weight. "I kept telling them, the reason businesses fail is because of cash flow," said David Kantor, one of Meow Wolf's first investors, who mentored the collective through its earliest for-profit days before risking $40,000 of his own. "I'm sure I became very annoying on the subject, but my concern was that they couldn't build it for anywhere near what they'd thought. And they couldn't." Several times during the *House*'s construction, Meow Wolf's founders had to tell employees that they might not make payroll. What saved the project, time and again, was Kadlubek's talent for finding new financial veins to tap. "I went through a year of fundraising at a psychedelic level," Kadlubek told me. "It was literally like spiritual ethereal zones that I had to get into in order to raise the $2.5 million it took to build the exhibit."

When *House of Eternal Return* finally opened, in March 2016, the artists' hopes were generally reasonable. Both NPR and *The New York Times* put out glowing reports (which to some Meow Wolfers was almost validation enough for their efforts), but everyone quickly settled into what promised to be a long hustle. The

The Experience Tube allows two people to converse through a stretchable sleeve of fabric.

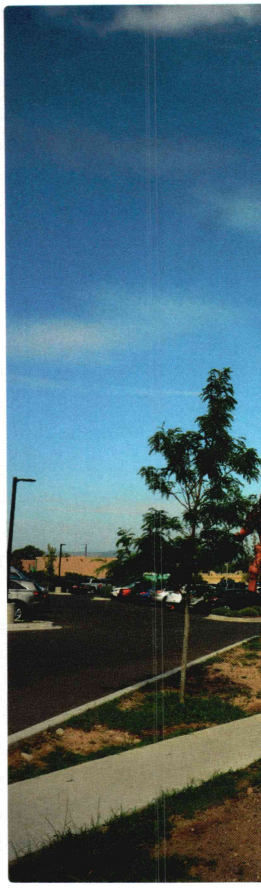
six founders staffed the front desk, served as docents — which at the *House* meant donning a lab coat and pretending to investigate the supposed trans-dimensional disaster — and did whatever else needed doing. "We were working the show," said Emily Montoya, who managed the gift shop, now a $1.4 million-per-year business. "It was good for us to be on the ground and see how people were responding — all the weird places people puked. It makes you not treat your own art as preciously."

Within months, word of mouth built. Exultant reviews piled up on TripAdvisor. Exhibits like the fridge became selfie darlings; by December, Meow Wolf was already New Mexico's most-Instagrammed place. Soon enough, even the collective's exceedingly optimistic year-one attendance projections had quadrupled, with 400,000 tickets sold. "The visitor numbers kept shocking us," said Kennedy, the art direction VP. "We thought there'd be a spike at first, and then it would settle down and be enough to sustain us. But then it started just ramping up and up and up."

Even back when the *House* was only a bowling-alley construction project on the brink of bankruptcy, Kadlubek was touting his plans to colonize other cities. Now, as would-be investors practically lined up on the sidewalk outside, those ambitious plans were growing feasible with alarming speed. Meow Wolf was no longer just a local curiosity. It was a tourism phenomenon at the vanguard of a mouthwateringly profitable kind of art-entertainment experience. As Kadlubek put it to me, with a satisfied smile, "We've taken it to the full-vision level faster than we anticipated."

INSIDE MEOW WOLF'S manufacturing headquarters, a cavernous former Caterpillar plant situated on a windblown expanse in south Santa Fe, the nicked-up concrete floors still bear the painted yellow stripes that once guided earth movers along the assembly line. These days, though, the 15-ton gantry cranes overhead transport giant robotic golems instead of tractors. On the morning I visited, the fabrication team was experimenting with its new toy: a room-sized, $250,000 laser cutter. For the moment, employees were using it to fashion steel bottle openers etched with the fanged Meow Wolf mascot. In the months to come, it'll be manufacturing creations far larger than that.

Venture-accelerated growth has morphed Meow Wolf into a much different animal than the scrappy collective of two years ago. During *House of Eternal Return*'s construction, the company had only one employee who could weld; now its build team has dozens. "Those creative guys think of what they want to make, and we make it," said Adam Rosen, Meow Wolf's metal-shop foreman, as a blockish, 10-foot-tall skeleton grinned out from its perch behind him. The proof of this boast stood at the far end of the



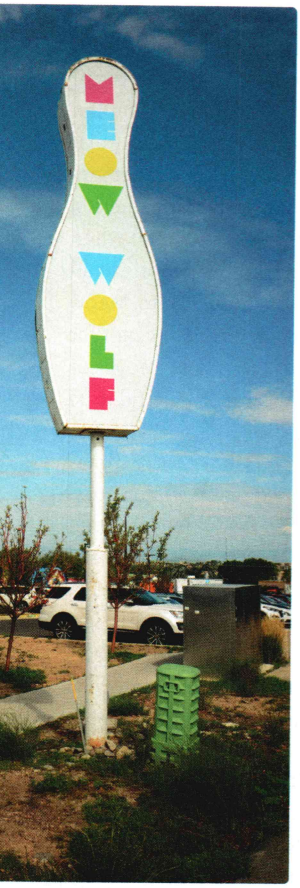
assembly line: the still-secret centerpiece of the upcoming Denver exhibit, a kaleidoscopic metal-and-glass behemoth that looks light-years ahead of anything the collective has yet produced.

When Meow Wolf bought the Caterpillar building last spring, using cash from a crowdfunding campaign that hit its $1 million goal in two days, the company figured it would provide enough space for years to come. It's already outgrown the place. What strikes you, walking through the plant and seeing the scores of people holding standing meetings or beavering away at translucent alien flora, is just how many artists now have real jobs with benefits. Tuscany Wenger, who leads the art department, told me that Meow Wolf saved Santa Fe's young artist scene. "I'm a recovered gallery worker," she said, while nearby, five young women with creative hair debated the relative durabilities of several spray-painted foam blobs. "I've been here 25 years, and I'd started to think maybe I'd need to move to a big city to find decent work. Meow Wolf changed that. We're all buying houses and cars now."

One amusing feature of this current Meow Wolf milieu — from the outside, at least — is the opportunity to watch a flock of young creators abruptly metamorphose into businesspeople. Di Ianni, for example, is a painter and sculptor with a degree from the Rhode Island School of Design who now handles such dynamic matters as insurance policy. Every founder I spoke with kept a frazzled eye on his or her phone, ever mindful of the next commitment. "All I do is go to meetings," said King, the tattooed creative VP. "From 9 in the morning to 7 at night, I sit in a room and talk to people." They've tried, in classic artist fashion, to invent the business world anew, only to realize the deeper wisdom of the bureaucratic megaculture. "I remember thinking it would be really cool if I had a room that was enclosed, where people could come talk to me, but I'd control that room," Brinkerhoff recalled. "Then I was like, 'That's an office.'"

Of all the business realities Meow Wolf finds itself bending to, the most pressing one by far is this: It has two new, vastly larger outposts in Denver and Las Vegas to fill with fresh installations over the next 18 months — and only a fraction of the work is done. At the Caterpillar plant, a sense of focused determination prevailed over the craft-store-explosion chaos. The whiteboards were dense with lists of projects in progress: "sentient slime fungus," "sky vines," "pizza couch design." As Montoya, the co-founder, told me, "I know we're going to pull it off, but I still don't know how."

Complicating the challenge even more, Meow Wolf must build these two new spaces to serve entirely different imperatives. The Denver location, slated to open in 2020 amid a snarl of highway overpasses, will be three times bigger than *House of Eternal Return*, but



FROM LEFT
A den of eyeballs; the exhibit's signage pays tribute to the building's history; a grove of neon trees

it has the virtue of being another one-off installation. The Las Vegas exhibit, set to debut in late 2019, poses a deeper logistical conundrum. Meow Wolf is planning the attraction much as a chain like Starbucks designs its stores: as an easily repeatable template for future expansion. "With Vegas, we have to think, Well, what if we build five more of these in the next few years?" explained Brinkerhoff. "We need to make it so that each one is worth seeing on its own if you've been to the others, but we're not reinventing the wheel each time, either."

The question that lingers above all of this, naturally, is why anyone should think that something as idiosyncratic as Meow Wolf will scale up. To Winston Fisher — whose family real-estate firm, Fisher Brothers, has invested heavily in the company — the answer is that experiences, not things, are the future of retail. "The mall, at best, gives you Santa at Christmas," he said. "That's not enough anymore." So when Fisher Brothers began planning to build a 126,000-square-foot "immersive bazaar" called Area15 on a tract of land west of the Vegas strip, Meow Wolf was the obvious anchor tenant. "You can be 5 years old or 75 and find wonder at Meow Wolf," he explained. "They have quickly managed to go from being a good idea to a company with real operational experience."

A visitor exits the fridge, a portal between worlds.

What strikes you, walking through the plant and seeing the scores of people beavering away at translucent alien flora, is just how many artists now have real jobs with benefits.

As eccentric an attraction as it is, *House of Eternal Return* dovetails with what has become a broad cultural hunger for immersive art experiences. Take (as many San Franciscans undoubtedly wish you would) the fantastically profitable Museum of Ice Cream, a pop-up selfie palace that has celebrities and civilians queuing up for hours for a $38 dip into its sprinkle pool. Or consider other spectacle-art blockbusters, like the dazzling light installations of Japan's teamLab or Random International's *Rain Room*, in which visitors stay miraculously dry as water plashes all around them. The uniting factors, said Ben Davis, the national art critic for Artnet, are broad, fantastical appeal and shareability. "This kind of Instagram-trap artistic experience has captured people's imaginations," Davis told me.

To differentiate these crowd-pleasing upstarts from their more distinguished forebears, Davis coined a term in his review of *House of Eternal Return*: Big Fun Art. It's a label that the collective finds irritating, not necessarily because it's subtly belittling (though there's that, too), but because it soft-plays a side of its work that it views with almost evangelical fervor. "It doesn't take into account the passionate importance that the work has not only to the artists but to visitors," Kennedy told me. For the company's founders, Meow Wolf isn't just an attraction but a worldview — a living gospel on the power of creativity, which they hope to spread far and wide. "People live this life on a predictable track," Kadlubek told me. "They do what they're used to, and they're bored by it. They don't look for new things. They don't explore." He paused. "But they do when they come to Meow Wolf."

THE FIRST TIME I visited *House of Eternal Return*, little of what I saw seemed to line up with the exhibit's rapturous reviews — at least not initially. Several exhibits, like the ballyhooed "laser harp," were either broken or on the blink. More to the point, the installation's multiverse-crossing narrative, which Kadlubek has extolled as nothing less than a reinvention of storytelling, never had a chance to click: Even on a slow day, the pieces of documentary evidence that tell the tale were too crowded around to access. At one moment, a confused-looking woman stopped me to ask, "Hey, did anyone happen to tell you what the mystery we're trying to solve is?"

It's at times like this that Meow Wolf's designs on Disneydom seem most premature, to say nothing of the collective's more grandiose ideas. Over coffee one morning, Kadlubek outlined for me his vision of Meow Wolf as an "alternative-reality network" in which the company's "location-based nodes" — i.e., physical exhibits — will be merely one component of the broader mission to pervade customers' minds with pure, uncut creativity. "Even when you're not there, you can be connected into a greater alternative reality that is more magical, more creative, more fun, more unexpected," he explained, his words gathering speed. "All of these things that you feel when you're inside Meow Wolf can be your life at all times if you're part of this future." Here, Meow Wolf's media relations man jumped in, not for the first time, to sand off the rougher edges of his CEO's audacity. "We just want the world to be a Meow Wolf," he joked.

Yet for all the installation's kinks, there comes a point in almost any visit when wonder prevails over skepticism. Even a consciousness that remains stubbornly resistant to expansion can't help but marvel at how much sheer imagination the *House* packs into its dark confines: campers parked in treetops, undulating tunnels of light, infinitely refracting cakes, domes tiled with eyes — hundreds of miniature universes, realized in fanatical detail. As you explore them, you encounter patrons exclaiming the same words over and over: "Whoa.... Cool!" It's a refrain one seldom hears at the Guggenheim or the Whitney. And it may just be the basis for an empire. ✪

TAYLOR CLARK, a contributing writer to *The California Sunday Magazine*, is based in Portland.

CHRISTIAN MICHAEL FILARDO is an agender Filipino American photographer who has lived everywhere from Manila to New Mexico and currently resides in Richmond, Virginia.

Better Homes
New Cook Book

MEANWHILE by WENDY MACNAUGHTON

Behind a security gate in southern New Mexico lies a commercial space-launch station: Spaceport America. For $250,000 a ticket, any aspiring Major Tom may soon be able to spend a few minutes among the stars.

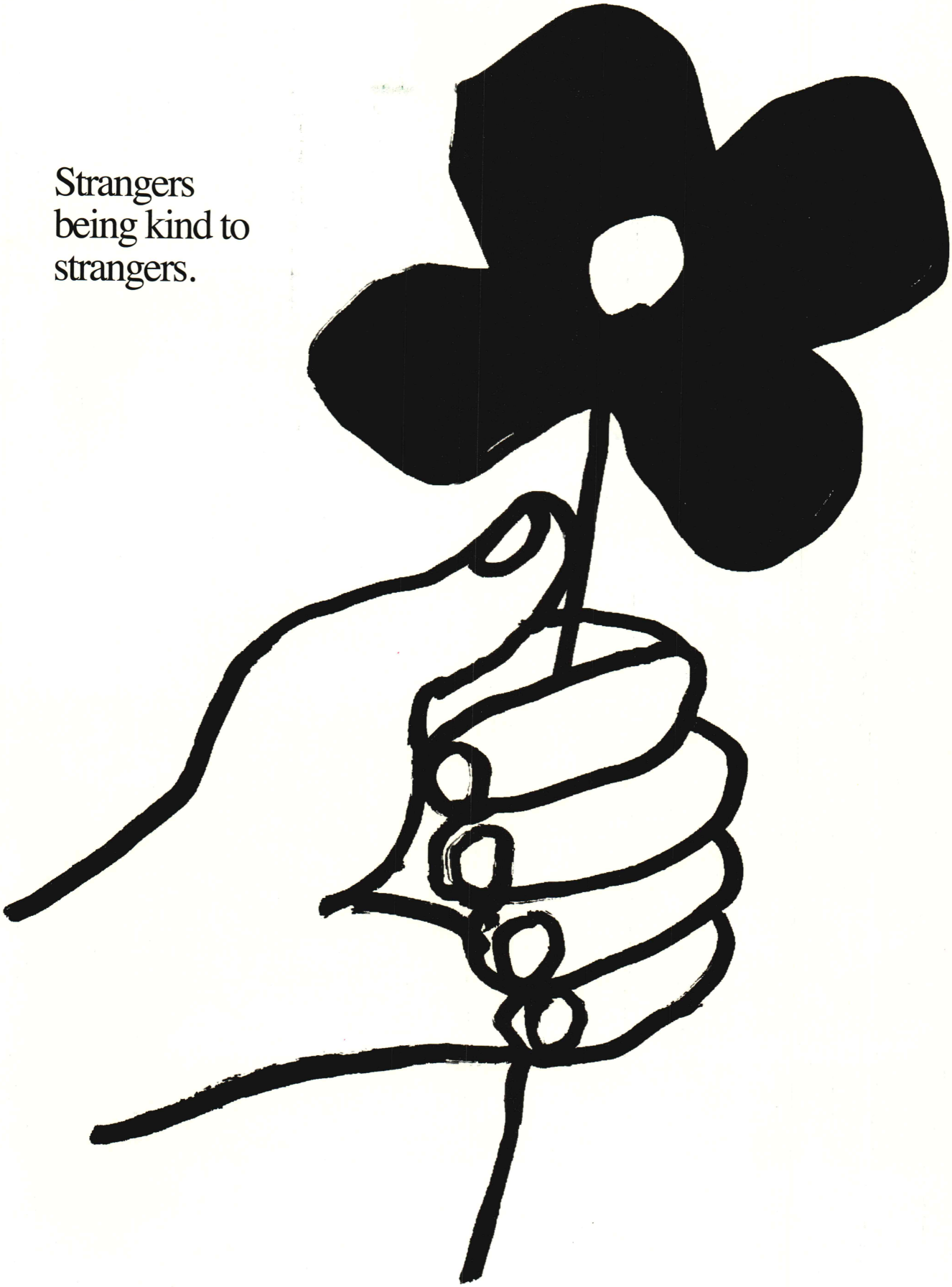
In the meantime, college students from around the world travel here to compete in the annual Spaceport America Cup, blasting off rockets that they've spent tens of thousands of hours building. The rockets often crash.

I asked them why they do it.

IT'S NERVE-WRACKING to SEND SOMETHING UP. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING to HAPPEN. THERE'S A LOT of HOPES and DREAMS ATTACHED to THAT ROCKET. ON OUR FIRST TEST, The NOZZLE CRACKED. JUST TWO WEEKS BEFORE The COMPETITION. I CRIED. WE HAD to COME to TERMS with IT. DIG DEEP. WE SAID, "WE'RE NOT GONNA QUIT. WE GOTTA MOVE FORWARD." WE DESIGNED The PROPELLANT OURSELVES, SO IT'S A BIG DEAL IT DIDN'T EXPLODE. BUT. WE DIDN'T HAVE TIME to TEST THE PARACHUTE, SO IT WENT UP 13,700 FEET, FELL to THE GROUND, LANDED SIDEWAYS, and EXPLODED. IT FELT GREAT.

TYLER, ZAC, JACOB, MICAH, CODY, ALEX, AND BILAL FROM STUDENTS FOR THE EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPACE, THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA; RACHEL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS; SURYA AND TEAM THRUSTMIT FROM THE MANIPAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (PICTURED)

Strangers
being kind to
strangers.



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